Voicing the Ineffable

Musical Representations of Religious Experience

edited by

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Introduction

Siglind Bruhn

The relationship between music and religion has long been a clearly delineated one, seemingly requiring little verbalization, much less justification. Up to the late Middle Ages, music employed for ritual expressions of faith in sacred contexts and for evocations of the numinous (as, e.g., in the theater) was contrasted with music presented for entertainment, be it that of an aristocracy with too much time to fill, or that of the common people with a need for diversion from their hard lives. Both the highly intricate works played in the august halls of princely palaces and the easily accessible genres presented in the open air on market squares and the like were eventually referred to as "secular" in nature. The distinction was understood to denote the spiritual as well as the aesthetic impact: music heard as a pastime or background to other activities (like formal dining or dancing) fulfilled different purposes and consequently conveyed different messages from music heard in the context of rituals addressing human erring and divine Redemption, or right versus wrong human conduct. The latter was believed to aid in the communication of eternal truth, while the former was suspected of arousing sensuality and thus potentially leading away from the spiritual perspective of life.

In subsequent centuries, music offered for entertainment at various levels of sophistication spilled from the courtly salons to the concert hall and the home. Such music, created for virtuoso performance or for the enjoyment in private chambers, occasionally made room for an expression of religious experiences outside the dedicated spaces of worship and moral edification. This aspect is particularly intriguing in instrumental music, where allusions to extra-musical messages are at best hinted at in titles or explanatory notes, and in those cases of vocal music where it can be shown that the musical language adds a subtext or at least significant nuances to the verbal text.

Based on case studies that transcend a music-analytical approach in the direction of the hermeneutic perspective, the essays collected in this volume set out to explore how the musical language in itself, independently of an explicitly sacred context, conveys the ineffable. The focus is on the musical means and devices employed to this effect and on the question what the presence of religious messages in certain works of secular music tells us about the spirituality of an era.

Great care has been taken to gather contributions that address various notions of the term "spiritual" and explore musical works from across the span of the common-practice period of Western music (from the 16th to the 20th centuries) and from a variety of genres—solo piano music, string quartets, and symphonies; early music drama and its Wagnerian and later offspring; piano-accompanied lieder as well as Romantic and modern oratorios, and even ballet music.

The first two essays explore how traits of local musical traditions are employed—either by cultural outsiders who interpret their "otherness" to effects suiting their own ends, or by composers emerging from within the tradition and exploiting its signaling functions. In her essay, "Of Spain and Sin: A Glance at Wolf's *Spanisches Liederbuch*," Susan Youens investigates the ambivalent attraction of Spain to the German imagination in two poems from Emanuel Geibel's and Paul Heyse's *Spanisches Liederbuch*. She argues convincingly that the composer's idiosyncratic, post-Wagnerian concept of the numinous as well as his anguish about his own sexuality, which brought him into conflict with rigid Catholic sexual morality, have influenced his music and may have contributed to a sense of identification with mythical Spanish religiosity.

This picture from the South-Eastern part of Europe is complemented by one from the North-West. In "From Paganism to Orthodoxy to Theosophy: Reflections of Other Worlds in the Piano Music of Rachmaninov and Scriabin," Anatole Leikin discusses ancient pagan traditions, Orthodox Christianity, and later mystical beliefs in Russia in connection with instrumental music. The essay traces how certain characteristics of musical language associated with or influenced by various religious experiences found their way into the 19th- and early 20th-century piano repertoire, particularly that of Rachmaninov and Scriabin.

Part II of the collection deals with music that served secular goals at least at the surface: the masques performed, with the active participation of the English aristocracy, at the court of King James, Richard Wagner's operas, most of which played to late-19th-century Germany's taste for Nordic myths,

and Mahler's symphonies, which satisfied early-20th-century Viennese audiences' hunger for recognizable folkloric ingredients. As the three studies show, even such purportedly worldly compositions may be designed along concealed spiritual agendas.

Magnar Breivik's essay, "A Sermon for Fishes in a Secular Age: On the Scherzo Movement of Mahler's Second Symphony," reads Gustav Mahler's second symphony as a giant depiction of the dualism of human death and eternal life. Between the first movement, "Totenfeier" (Funeral), and the extensive "Auferstehung" (Resurrection) finale, the works includes three intermediate movements. According to Mahler's program notes, in the third movement, often referred to as the scherzo, "the spirit of disbelief and renunciation" has seized the fictive protagonist. The movement is based on the composer's prior setting of "Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt" from the collection of German folk poetry, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. Breivik explores the music in this piece in relation to the legend and its parable, as a senseless and purposeless dance of human renunciation denoting denial and the spirit of alienation from traditional faith in a secular fin-de-siècle.

In "Music, Religious Experience, and Transcendence in Ben Jonson's *Masque of Beautie*: A Case Study in Collaborative Form," Anthony Johnson draws on the fact that, as recent research has suggested, a number of Stuart Masques (particularly those produced in a collaboration of the poet, Ben Jonson, and the architect, Inigo Jones) may be structured around "transcendent moments": complementary nodes in which their scenic, choreographic, and textual architectonics key in with one another through the Platonic/Pythagorean number harmonies which were common to the arts of the time. Where the music played to these masques, which was written primarily by Alphonso Ferrabosco II and Nicholas Lanier, survives, there is evidence to suggest that this aspect, too, may have been formally arranged to complement the same transcendent moments. Johnson examines the musical, scenographic, and literary collaboration on the Stuart court masques and discusses the implications of the "transcendent moments" they create as surrogates for religious experience.

Robert Davies, in his essay, "The Truth Ineffably Divine: The Loss and Recovery of the Sacred in Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*," analyzes the representation of the sacred in Romantic art. *Parsifal*'s tangled and problematic roots in medieval romance, in Christian allegory, and in the aesthetics of the Wagnerian music drama give rise to forms of subjectivity that redefine traditional conceptions of the sacred. The author argues that the internalization of quest-romance that is such a dominant pattern in *Parsifal*, while

appearing to affirm a traditional apprehension of the ineffable, in fact involves a radical reworking of the forms of religious experience for an essentially godless modernity.

The three essays of Part III deal with subject matters that are more specifically sacred; in each case, at least one aspect of the work is found to be presented from an unexpected angle.

In "Eschatological Aspects in Edward Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*," Eva Maria Jensen reads this concert-oratorio, which is based on a text by Cardinal Newman, as a secularized interpretation of death and salvation whereby religious qualities have been reduced to aesthetic attributes. She analyzes how Elgar copes with the eschatological aspects of Newman's text and, particularly, how he expresses in music—in a work that, while unusual in many respects, stands firmly in the centuries-long tradition of European oratorio writing—those issues that are difficult if not altogether impossible to express in words.

In "Wordless Songs of Love, Glory, and Resurrection: Musical Emblems of the Holy in Hindemith's Saints," Siglind Bruhn discusses Hindemith's three musical portrayals of canonized persons in compositions not intended for sacred functions: Saint Francis of Assisi, protagonist of the ballet *Nobilissima Visione*, Saint Antony of Egypt, the visionary impersonation of the painter Grünewald in the opera *Mathis der Maler*, and the Virgin Mary, whom the composer places at the center of a highly provocative tension between spirituality and sensuality in his two versions of the Rilke song cycle *Das Marienleben*. Bruhn observes that in all three cases, the composer introduces the protagonists with historic quotations: a trouvère song, a Lutheran choral, and a 14th-century Easter hymn respectively. She argues that both the initial choice of the pre-existing musical material and its further development within a 20th-century composition serve to characterize the protagonists in their struggle between spiritual quest and human temptations in the midst of their idiosyncratic concerns.

Danuta Mirka, in "Passion According to Penderecki," addresses the general question of how the internal structure of a compositional system determines the expression of a work, and offers a persuasive answer with regard to the sonoristic system of binarily opposed sound-masses in Penderecki's interpretation of the Passion drama. She juxtaposes the composer's sonoristic instrumental writing, employed in sections of the Gospel text that depict dramatic aspects of the story (and particularly the extreme emotional states ascribed here to the suffering Christ) with his vocal writing based on twelve-tone principles, which he uses in the settings of

hymns, psalms, and a sequence constituting the contemplative, liturgical comments to the events of the Good Friday.

Finally, Part IV of the volume addresses several of the overarching concerns shared by composers from diverse periods and places in their attempt at a musical representation of religious experience. Chandler Carter's essay, "Spiritual Descents and Ascents: Religious Implications in Pronounced Motion to the Subdominant and Beyond," builds on the fact that the nearly obligatory large-scale tonal motion in works of the common practice is to the region of the dominant harmony. Nonetheless, he argues, composers some-times strongly emphasize the region of the subdominant or its harmonic extensions, even at or near structural cadences. In analyzing examples of such pronounced motions to the subdominant and beyond in works by Bach, Beethoven and Brahms, but also by Josquin, Schubert, and Verdi as well as Stravinsky, Vaughn Williams, and Ives—works in which either a text or an explicit program points to a religious or spiritual meaning—Carter speculates on the possibility that such tonal motion can imply a similar meaning also outside such explicitly stated contexts.

Mozart's person and music have been valued very differently in religious contexts. In his essay, "Time and Divine Providence in Mozart's Music," Nils Holger Petersen addresses not so much Mozart's personal relationship to Christianity, but argues that his works, including even non-texted compo-sitions, can be read in a theological light. He proposes to take up the hermeneutical problems mainly through a discussion of the idea of musical form in relation to the traditional Christian understanding of the concept of time, a concept formulated by St Augustine in the late 4th century but prevalent in Christian theology ever since. Through a musical double example, two string quartet movements from the quartets in d minor (K. 173 and 421), Petersen shows how the musical structure in Mozart's work can be understood to deepen traits of a Christian understanding of time and history.

In the final essay, "Music and the Ineffable," Eyolf Østrem looks into the aesthetic history of the assumption that music may be particularly apt at expressing the ineffable. He presents two approaches to the notion of "the ineffable," one an historical understanding based on concepts about God's ineffability as developed by Jerome and Augustine, the other a philosophical evaluation of the term in light of modern language philosophy. While according to Jerome, God exceeds *any* comprehension, Augustine allowed for an understanding beyond language, based on sensual experiences that suggest the ineffable God by way of analogy. Less prominent during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, these thoughts resurfaced with the German Romantics

and their aesthetics. Their notion of the character of absolute music resembled Augustine's notion of the ineffable God. Finally, Østrem shows how the "loss of the referent" stated in the writings of Saussure, Wittgenstein, and Derrida has not only reshaped our view of language, but has also made it possible to re-construe music's relationship to the spoken word.

Part I

Signs of Transcendence
and *couleur locale*

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Of Spain and Sin:
A Glance at Wolf's *Spanisches Liederbuch*

Susan Youens

"Cosas de España" are a leitmotif of German Romanticism, evident in numerous dramas, novels, poems, operas, paintings, and songs. As Europe was increasingly divided into industrial powers on the one hand and provincial backwaters on the other, artists availed themselves of the "land between the Occident and the Orient" for a variety of reasons, including a license for the unleashing of fantasy and the transference of their own psychological demons and angels to a safer place, somewhere other than the "vaterländische Heimat." "Exotic" realms often serve such purposes, and they are always part fact, part fiction (the facts cliché-ridden, the fiction frequently predominant), a repository for another culture's moral, sexual, religious, and political preoccupations. So it was for the German-speaking countries. One need only think of the afterlife and influence of Friedrich Schiller's drama *Don Carlos, Infant von Spanien*, with its white-hot blank verse and its long, torturous genesis; of Johann Gottfried Herder's translation of the anonymous 12th-century poem *El Cid* (transmitted, however, from a French version) and Ludwig Tieck's 1810 translation of Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*; of August Wilhelm Schlegel's translations of plays by Pedro Calderón de la Barca; of Tieck's idyll *Almansur* and Heinrich Heine's tragedy, *Almansor*, to name but a few, to realize how very useful the idea of Spain was to those who lived in colder climes to the northeast. The list could go on and on; one cuts it off arbitrarily. To be Romantic was to be Hispanophile, one concludes.[1]

The French in the 1830s were more "piqué par la mouche espagnole" than anyone else, perhaps because they "needed to detach themselves culturally from their less powerful, less progressive Catholic Latin neighbors," as James

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[1]See Beatriz Brinkmann Scheihing, *Spanische Romanzen in der Übersetzung von Diez, Geibel und von Schack: Analyse und Vergleich* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert, 1975) and Margret Staub, *Die spanische Romanze in der Dichtung der deutschen Romantik: Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Romanzenwerkes von Tieck, Brentano und Heine*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hamburg, 1970.

Parakilas has argued,[2] but Protestant northern Europe, England, and Catholic Austria had their own reasons for making use of Spanish exoticism in the wake of Napoleon's occupation of that country from 1808 to 1813. Certainly Austria was situated geographically and historically in such a fashion as to give it access to various exoticisms for various purposes. The country's very definition of itself had for several centuries entailed contrasting its Christian-Catholic identity with the nearby fact and fiction of the Turks (the reality of actual conflict the fiction of propagandistic characterisation of the exotic Other), as any tourist visiting the Historical Museum of the City of Vienna quickly realizes. As Prussian Germany waxed stronger and dreams of a pan-Germanic unity in which Austria might play an equal or even commanding role died a slow death, other exoticisms came into play for other reasons. The *Drang nach Italien* of Goethean neo-classicism in the late 18th century modulated into the pre-Raphaelites' visions of Italy and the Spain of gypsies, guitars, and violent passions. One way for provincial cultures to survive, after all, was to market themselves to the outside world as picturesque.

Among the staples of the semi-fictive Spain foreign artists found so compelling was what one might call the Spain of Francisco de Zurbarán, whose portrayals of Saint Francis and Saint Bruno at prayer show them enveloped in other-worldly rapture or brooding, anguished awareness of sin. (It can be difficult to distinguish between the two; one notes the mouth slightly opened, whether in horror and self-loathing or in ecstasy, as a recurring feature of these paintings). In perhaps the most famous such work, owned by the National Gallery in London, Zurbarán's St. Francis holds a skull—the classic emblem of the *memento mori*—clasped in one hand, but does not look at it, instead gazing upwards to vistas the artist tells us are not earthly. This is the pictorial analogue to the rapture and anguish one finds as well in the poetry of the 16th- and 17th-century Spanish mystics, such as Teresa of Avila, Juan de la Cruz, Fray Luís de León, and others in Spain's Golden Age, and such fervor found favor with those German Romantics prone to conversion from Lutheranism to the Catholicism of mystics and miracles. What shocked the literary world when Friedrich Ludwig Graf zu Stolberg-Stolberg converted to Catholicism in the 1790s (polemics flew freely) barely caused a stir when Clemens Brentano converted in 1817—and Brentano would be one of those Romantic poets drawn to Spanish themes, possibly as another means of confirming his newly-Catholic identity.

[2]James Parakilas, "How Spain Got a Soul," in Jonathan Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1998).

Spain's successful defense of its country from Moors, Jews, and Protestants was long over by the time the 19th century made Spain an exotic realm of gypsies, guerillas, martyrs and monks. It was not abstract concerns of theology that drew latter-day artists to mystical Spain, but the picturesque and dramatic aspects, a Spain in which a mythified Tomás de Torquemada lurked perpetually in the background (or, as in Victor Hugo's play *Torquemada*, the foreground). The Spanish Inquisition, despite the efforts of some historians to point out that it was not as vicious as horrified Protestant propagandists would have one believe, is not one of Catholic Christendom's prouder achievements. If it was academic jealousy, rife then as now, at the University of Salamanca which resulted in the great poet Luis de Leon's imprisonment in an Inquisition cell for almost five years, there was undeniably a Catholic prosecutorial system which people envious and vengeful for whatever reason could use to their advantage. The same river of blood, so northern Europeans imagined, ran from the auto-da-fè to the dark, austere fervor of Spanish martyrs to the harrowing of the *alumbrados* and *conversos*. In such paintings as José de Ribera's *Saint Bartholomew about to be Martyred* or Zurbarán's series of the martyrs of the Indies, 19th-century Europeans found what they considered to be proof that Spanish Catholicism was uniquely violent, fanatical, dark, a medieval survival in the modern day.[3] That there was both a model of mystic fervor to admire and cultural assumptions of superiority to such primitive violence at work in these Romantic myths of Spain seems apparent. According to the so-called "White Legend," Spain turned its back on modernity in order to preserve the spiritual values that materialistic bourgeois cultures had lost, while on the flip side of the same coin, the "Black Legend" would have it that the Inquisition had cut the country off from the intellectual and scientific achievements that were the basis of progress in more advanced nations. Historical revisionism is now at work to rewrite or modify these points of view, but both had currency in the 19th century.[4]

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[3]See Ilse Hempel Lipschutz, *Spanish Painting and the French Romantics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

[4]A useful summary of different historical views of Spain can be found in Raymond Carr, ed., *Spain: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Henry Kamen, who wrote ch. 6, "Vicissitudes of a World Power, 1500–1700," is also the author of *Inquisition and society in Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); *The phoenix and the flame: Catalonia and the Counter-Reformation*; and *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993 and 1998). See also Benzion Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition in fifteenth-century Spain* (New York: Random House, 1995). These works are rich in further bibliography on the subject.

One finds the romanticized Spain not just in works at the level of a Tieck or Heine or Hugo, but in *Trivialliteratur* as well. One of Schubert's more second-rate poets, for example, provides us with a fine specimen of Hibernian monkish ferocity of the fictive variety in a poem which also exemplifies the commonplace equation Spanish Painting = Religious Painting ... not entirely true, of course, but part and parcel of mythified Spain. In Johann Gabriel Seidl's (bad) ballad, "Der unbekannte Maler" (The unknown painter), the great Rubens visits a cloister on the banks of the Manzanares—this is a fictional scenario—and sees, tucked away in a dark corner, a masterful painting of a dying monk. When Seidl's Rubens exclaims in wonder and asks the pale, earnest monk guiding him through the monastery who painted the canvas, he is told only, "Er ist todt!" (He is dead). That evening, as Rubens walks along the riverbank, a monk in one of the cells overhead throws a palette and brushes into the river. The Flemish artist's guide earlier that day was, Seidl hints, the man who painted the picture; because earthly acclaim of any kind, even for a painting depicting the godly death of a priest, is incompatible with dedication to God, he renounces his art with the barely controlled violence so often attributed to the eponymous Spanish monk.[5] If this is balladesque Dreck, it is also testament to the myth-making of one culture about another, evident not only in great art but also in works addressed to a lower common denominator; one could multiply *ad nauseam, ad infinitum* poems similar to this one in anthologies throughout the German-speaking world. Schubert was no longer alive when "Der unbekannte Maler" appeared in print, and one doubts that he would have been interested in it for music had he lived longer and seen it. No one else was.

But an impressive list of song composers both major and minor gravitated to the Hispanicizing works of another poet contemporary with Seidl (albeit German, not Austrian): Emanuel Geibel (1815-1884).[6] The young Geibel,

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[5]Johann Gabriel Seidl, "Der unbekannte Maler" in *Aurora. Taschenbuch für das Jahr 1843*, vol. 19 (Vienna: Franz Riedl's Witwe und Sohn, 1843), pp. 61-63. Seidl was fond of Hispanic themes: five years earlier, he had published "Der Schatz von Toledo. (Romanze)" in *Aurora. Taschenbuch für das Jahr 1838* (pp. 246-249), to cite only one other example. Seidl (1804-1875—the same life span as the much greater poet Eduard Mörike) was the poet of eleven Schubert songs, including such masterpieces as "Im Freien," "Das Zügenglöcklein," "Der Wanderer an den Mond," and the last song Schubert ever wrote, "Die Taubenpost."

[6]See Karl Theodor Gaedertz, *Emanuel Geibel, Sänger der Liebe, Herold des Reiches* (Leipzig: Georg Wigand, 1897); Karl Goedeke, *Emanuel Geibel* (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1869); Carl Leimbach, *Emanuel Geibels Leben, Werke und Bedeutung für das deutsche Volk*, ed. Max Trippenbach, 2nd rev. aug. ed. (Wolfenbüttel: Julius Zwißler, 1894).

whose poetic fluency was evident early, was invited to join the "Litterarische Gesellschaft"[7] whose members included Adelbert von Chamisso, August Kopisch, Ernst Raupach, Franz Kugler (whose *Skizzenbuch* had reportedly enraptured Geibel), Joseph von Eichendorff, and Karl von Holtei—older literary lions, one notes, not the "Jung Deutschland" writers active in the same city at the same time.[8] Another member of Berlin's literary elite, Bettina von Arnim, helped to make possible Geibel's journey to Greece in 1838-1839 ("Berlin ist nicht die Welt," he told his mother in the course of enlisting familial support for the journey), where he worked as a tutor to the ten- and eight-year old sons of a Russian ministry official in Athens. When his teaching duties ended at the Pentecost season in 1839, he embarked on a journey to the Greek isles with his longtime friend, the classical scholar Ernst Curtius; the two would publish their joint translations of ancient Greek poetry the following year.[9] "The South has captured me, as if in a magic net," he wrote to his friend Carl Litzmann, who would subsequently publish his reminiscences of Geibel, three years after the poet-translator's death.[10] If Geibel's fascination with Italy, Greece, and Spain for poetic purposes thereafter is undeniable, it is also worth noting that he never went back.

Even before the voyage south, Geibel was fascinated by Spanish themes, so we are told by his friends and by 19th-century biographers, and his youthful poems include "Zigeunerleben," "Der Hidalgo," and "Der

[7]When his *Wanderjahre* came to an end in 1852 and Geibel settled in Munich with his bride, he became part of a literary society called "Die Krokodile," founded in 1856 over his initial objections. See Johannes Mahr, ed., *Die Krokodile: Ein Münchner Dichterkreis* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun., 1987) and Paul Heyse, *Jugenderinnerungen und Bekenntnisse*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 1900, repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1995).

[8]It is worth noting that the elderly Eichendorff was preoccupied with translation from the Spanish in the early 1840s when Geibel was similarly engaged. See Joseph von Eichendorff, trans., *Infante Don Juan Manuel. Der Graf Lucanor. Nach dem Alt-Spanischen* (Berlin, M. Simion, 1843). This book of fifty "Exempla" is one of the oldest monuments of Castilian literature, the original dating from thirteen years before the appearance of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Eichendorff also translated plays by Calderón, a selection of Cervantes's interlude, and several Spanish ballads and lyric poems.

[9]Emanuel Geibel and Ernst Curtius, *Uebersetzungen aus griechischen Dichtern* (Bonn: E. Weber, 1840). More translations of the poetry of classical antiquity followed thirty-five years later in the *Classisches Liederbuch; Griechen und Römer in deutscher Nachbildung* (Berlin: W. Hertz, 1875), Geibel continuing the "songbook" format he had already established in his Spanish and Italian anthologies of 1852 and 1860.

[10]Carl Conrad Theodor Litzmann, *Emanuel Geibel. Aus Erinnerungen, Briefen und Tagebüchern* (Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 1887).

Zigeunerbube im Norden" (Gypsy Life, The Hidalgo, The Gypsy Lad in the North); Schumann would set "Der Hidalgo" to music as op. 30, no. 3 in August 1840, the song both a jubilant celebration of his victory over Friedrich Wieck in the matter of marriage to Clara and "a template for later works with a Spanish flavor," as Graham Johnson writes.[11] Upon his return from Greece, Geibel began to study Spanish intensively. In the spring of 1841, he was invited to put in order the extensive library at Schloß Escheberg near Kassel of the late Ernst Friedrich Georg Otto Freiherr von der Malsburg, who had translated Calderón's plays and whose book collection included many works of Spanish literature. Geibel's host, the Freiherr's brother Karl, was a friend of the Geibel family and hoped to alleviate Geibel's grief over the recent death of his mother by giving him congenial work to do; Karl von der Malsburg had also spent time in Spain, and his tales of life there helped to whet Geibel's appetite for all things Spanish. Geibel would later describe his year in Escheberg as "eine Zeit sorgloser Ruhe und poetischer Befruchtung" (a time of carefree peace and poetic ripening), with both translations from the Spanish and his own political poems—the *Zeitstimmen* (Voices of the Times), only published after being scissored by censors who could smell revolution brewing and did not want poets egging on the malcontents—the fruits of his labors there. The next year, in 1842, Geibel sought out the services of the noted Hispanist Victor Aimé Huber[12] for further instruction in the Spanish language and for Huber's expert advice with what would become Geibel's first volume of translations from the Spanish: the *Volkslieder und Romanzen der Spanier im Versmasse des Originals verdeutscht* (Folksongs and Romances of the Spanish People, rendered in German in the original poetic meter) of 1843. In 1860, Geibel would collaborate with the Brahms poet Adolph Friedrich Baron von Schack on a third Spanish anthology, the *Romanzero der Spanier und Portugiesen* (Romances of the Spanish and Portuguese), yet another manifestation of Geibel's lifelong interest in Spanish verse Teutonized. But Geibel himself never went to Spain at all. One recalls Heine's famously

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[11]Graham Johnson, "Robert Schumann and his Poets," in *The Songs of Robert Schumann*, vol. 2, with Simon Keenlyside, baritone, and Graham Johnson, pianist (Hyperion Records Ltd., CDJ33102, 1997), p. 38.

[12]Geibel assuredly knew Huber's own volume of Spanish romances in German translation; see Victor Aimé Huber, *Sammlung spanischer Romanzen aus der frühen Zeit* (Aarau: H.R. Sauerländer, 1821). Huber would later publish the *Teatro pequeño de elocuencia y poesía castellana*, 2 vols. (Bremen, 1832) that would become a possible source for the *Spanisches Liederbuch*; he was also a social reformer who wrote against slavery in North America.

mischievous quip to Théophile Gautier, "How will you speak about Spain when you've actually gone there?" Gautier *did* go, despite his trepidation that he would lose the Spain of his dreams, and first published his observations of the country in 1843.[13] It is, of course, easier to preserve a fantasy-world intact in the absence of actual experience, and Geibel's Spain was a paper conglomeration of daggers, bandits, gypsies, monks, guitars, contrabandistas, and moonlit nights in Granada. That there were political overtones in being so interested in nationalisms of different varieties during one of the most nationalistic eras in history seems apparent when one surveys Geibel's career.[14]

But the book that drew so many composers, beginning with Schumann and continuing throughout the entire last half of the century, was Geibel's second anthology of Spanish poems Teutonized, the *Spanisches Liederbuch* (Spanish Songbook) of 1852. For this collection, Geibel collaborated with a man fifteen years his junior, Paul Heyse (1830-1914), the organizing force in the Munich poetic society "Die Krokodile" (named after a poem by Hermann Lingg, the poet of Brahms's "Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer") and winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1910; he was considered "the master of the modern novella," although few read his original works nowadays.[15] Both men were accomplished translators in several languages, with Geibel gravitating to Spanish and the classical tongues, Heyse to Italian and French; the author of a literary study of Heyse's translations calls him "Italianissimo," and his

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[13]See Théophile Gautier, *Tra los montes. Voyage en Espagne* (Paris: V. Magen, 1843), reprinted in 1845 as *Voyage en Espagne*. See Gautier, *Voyage en Espagne, suivi de España*, ed. Patrick Berthier (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), pp. 514-516.

[14]Andreas Hofer's doomed Tyrolean uprising of 1809 was inspired in part by the Spanish *guerrilleros*, and this became one factor in the replacement of the Spanish grandee by the guerilla, contrabandista, and gypsy in popular imagination.

[15]In the first years of the 20th century, Heyse was embroiled in a censorship controversy over his drama about Mary Magdalene; see Andreas Pollinger, *Der Zensurprozess um Paul Heyses Drama "Maria von Magdala" (1901-1903): Ein Beispiel für die Theaterzensur im Wilhelminischen Preussen* (Frankfurt and New York: Peter Lang, 1989). See also Sigrid von Moisy and Karl Heinz Keller, *Paul Heyse, Münchner Dichterfurst im bürgerlichen Zeitalter: Ausstellung in der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek, 23. Jänuar bis 11. April 1981* (Munich: Beck, 1981) and Erich Petzet, ed., *Der Briefwechsel von Emanuel Geibel und Paul Heyse* (Munich: J. F. Lehmann, 1922). Heyse's long list of original works includes a Merlin novel, a drama about La Fornarina, and a novel with the Goethean title *Ueber allen Gipfeln*.

most famous novella, "L'arrabbiata," was set in Italy.[16] Geibel and Heyse had important predecessors in their enterprise of poetico-cultural dissemination of Spanish verse, such as Johann Gottfried Herder's inclusion of Spanish ballads (translated into German) in *Stimmen der Völker*,[17] Friedrich Christian Diez's two collections of *Altspanische Romanzen*,[18] and Jacob Grimm's 1815 *Silva de romances viejos*[19] (the Spanish originals); like Herder, they were not field ethnographers and relied almost entirely on previously published anthologies of Spanish poetry.

There is no accounting for sources at all in the *Spanisches Liederbuch*, but the latter-day scholars Margaret Sleeman and Gareth Davies have made use of Geibel's maddeningly vague list of books in the 1843 *Volkslieder* in order to speculate that approximately eighty of the poems in the *Spanisches Liederbuch* were taken from Johann Nikolaus Böhl von Faber's *Floresta de rimas antiguas castellanas*, a three-volume set published between 1821 and 1825.[20] There is a high degree of carryover between this famous work of German Hispanism and other sources listed in Geibel's 1843 *Volkslieder*, such as Don Eugenio de Ochoa's *Tesoro de romanceros y cancioneros españoles, históricos, caballerescos, moriscos y otros* (Paris: Baudry, Librería Europea) and Agustín Durán's *Romancero general, o Collección de romances castellanos anteriores al siglo XVIII* from 1849-1851, although Ochoa and Durán were often disdainful of Böhl von Faber's "corrupt"

[16]Gabriele Kroes-Tillmann, *Paul Heyse Italianissimo: Über seine Dichtungen und Nachdichtungen* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1993). Heyse himself tells us that he began to translate Spanish poetry in early 1850 while he was a student in Bonn.

[17]Herder first came across Spanish poetry in Thomas Percy's famous 1765 *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, which includes two ballads from Ginés Pérez de Hita's *Historia de los Vandos de los Zegries y Abencerrajes casualleros moros de Granada, de las civiles guerras*, the first part published in Zaragoza in 1595, the second part published in Cuenca in 1619. An edition was published in Gotha by Steudel & Keil in 1805.

[18]See Friedrich Diez, trans., *Altspanische Romanzen* (Frankfurt: Hermann, 1818) and the same translator's *Altspanische Romanzen, besonders vom Cid und Kaiser Karls Paladinen* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1821).

[19]Jacob Grimm, *Silva de romances viejos* (Vienna: J. Mayer, 1815). Given the fascination with all things medieval, Grimm omitted the "new romance" and any lyrical poetry.

[20]Margaret G. Sleeman and Gareth A. Davies, "Variations on Spanish Themes. The *Spanisches Liederbuch* of Emanuel Geibel and Paul Heyse and Its Reflection in the Songs of Hugo Wolf" in *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society: Literary and Historical Section*, vol. 18 (1982): 155-274. See also Don Juan Nicolas Böhl de Faber, *Floresta de Rimas Antiguas Castellanas*, 3 vols. (Hamburg: Perthes & Besser, 1821-1825).

versions. Böhl von Faber, who was the Hanseatic consul of El Puerto de Santa Maria near Cádiz, often saw fit to "improve," "clarify," or even rewrite whatever he thought might be obscure. The likelihood of Geibel's and Heyse's dependence on the *Floresta* (especially the first volume, devoted largely to anonymous popular verse) for much of their collection is reinforced when one notes Böhl von Faber's division of each volume into "Rimas sacras," "Rimas doctrinales," "Rimas amorosas," and "Rimas festivas"; "doctrinal poems," however, do not appear in Geibel's and Heyse's collection, published in the Lutheran north of Germany. What follows the "Geistliche Lieder" in the *Spanisches Liederbuch* are ninety-nine "Weltliche Lieder" (secular songs), followed by fifty-five anonymous seguidillas, thirty tiny (one quatrain each) gypsy songs, and an "Anhang" of "Provençalische Lieder" translated by Heyse. The vast majority of the poems, as one can see, are secular and have to do with erotic love, but the religious works are given pride of place— both subtle reinforcement of the notion that religious fervor had a different flavor in Spain than in colder climes and a shrewd marketing ploy on Geibel's part. He had hoped the work would appear in print in time for the Christmas season of 1851 and that female readers in search of gifts for sisters, cousins, daughters, mothers, and aunts might find the work enticing (this explains the lack of sources, given the female, that is, non-scholarly, readership). Delays held up publication until spring of 1852, but the appeal to the pious could still be considered a "selling point" for the anthology.

Geibel and Heyse were clearly careful to arrange the thirteen "Geistliche Lieder" in a meaningful sequence, beginning with the classical device of invocation of a Muse and the poet's dedication to her, here, the Virgin Mary: "Nun bin ich dein, du aller Blumen Blume" (Now am I thine, thou flower of all flowers), a translation of Juan Ruíz, Archpriest of Hita's "Quiero seguir" from the famous *Libro de buen amor* (a poetic miscellany published in Salamanca in 1343) and "Die du Gott gebarst, du Reine" (Thou who didst bear God, thou pure one) by Nicolas Nuñez. In the wake of "Die du Gott gebarst" are four poems about the Nativity, beginning before the Child's birth and continuing after it and onward to the believer's desire to follow Christ: "Nun wandre, Maria" (Now journey on, Mary) by Francisco de Ocaña, whose *Cancionero para cantar la noche de Navidad, y las fiestas de Pascua* (Songbook for singing Christmas Night and the Feastday of Easter) was printed in Alcalá in 1603; "Die ihr schwebet um diese Palmen" (Ye winds who blow through these palm trees), or "Pues andais en las palmas" by the great dramatist Lope de Vega Carpio (1562-1613); "Ach, des Knaben Augen"

(Ah, the Child's eyes), from "Los ojos del niño" by Juan López de Ubeda, whose *Cancionero general de la doctrina cristiana* appeared in 1579; and "Führ' mich, Kind, nach Bethlehem" (Lead me, Child, to Bethlehem), or the anonymous "Llevadme, niño, a Belen." A grouping of four poems about the anguished consciousness of sin follow: "Mühvoll komm' ich und beladen" (Wearily I come, and heavy-laden), or "Vengo triste y lastimado" by Don Manuel del Rio, or Geibel himself, borrowing the name of one of Amanda von Trummer's (the young girl he married in 1852) Spanish ancestors on her mother's side; the anonymous "Ach, wie lang die Seele schlummert" (Oh, how long the soul sleeps), or "Mucho ha que el alma duerme"; "Wunden trägst du, mein Geliebter" (Thou art wounded, my beloved), or "Feridas teneis mi vida" by José de Valdivivielso (1560?-1636); and the anonymous "Herr, was trägt der Boden hier" (Lord, what does the ground bear here), or "Qué producirà mi Diós." The final three are less thematically coherent: two poems by "Don Manuel del Rio," one about the dying swan who sings a final glorious melody (no. 11) and the other a poetic retelling of the tale of the seven wise virgins (no. 13). The penultimate poem (no. 12) is the only work by St. John of the Cross in the anthology: a translation of the famous "En una noche oscura" as "In mitternächt'ger Stunde" (At the midnight hour).

19th-century song composers, ever-alert for new poetic sources, quickly found their way to these translations, especially given the dual Romantic fascination with folksong and with Spain. Schumann availed himself of Geibel's 1843 *Volkslieder und Romanzen der Spanier* for the ten solo songs, duets, and quartets of the *Spanisches Liederspiel: Ein Cyclus von Gesängen aus dem Spanischen*, op. 74 of 1849, and Johannes Brahms composed his "Spanisches Lied" (a poem Wolf would later set to music as "In dem Schatten meiner Locken") in 1852. Other composers followed suit; one need only check the incomplete listings in Ernst Challier's *Grosser Lieder-Katalog* of 1885 to realize how popular the book was.[21] *Kleinmeister* (who are quite capable of a felicitous song on a good day) such as Ferdinand Hiller, Leopold Damrosch, and Adolf Jensen rub shoulders with the accredited "greats" in the long roll-call of those indebted to the translators of the *Spanisches Liederbuch*. But despite the length of the list, it is unlikely that Wolf would have found much

[21]Ernst Challier, *Grosser Lieder-Katalog: Ein alphabetisch geordnetes Verzeichniss sämmt-licher einstimmiger Lieder* (Berlin: privately published, 1885). On p. 474, Challier lists thirteen settings of "Klinge, klinge, mein Pandero," the composers including Joseph Dessauer, Ferdinand Hiller, Adolf Jensen, Franz Lachner, Adolf Bernhard Marx, and Anton Rubinstein, among others, and on p. 854, eleven settings of "Und schläfst du, mein Mädchen," to cite two examples only.

to impede him. He was, one recalls, in a double bind for much of his compositional life: he both wanted poems that had not been set to music by the great song composers before him and disliked contemporary poetry with a passion. The poetic repertories to which he gravitated had, many of them, already been colonized by the best of his predecessors. Furthermore, he was a *Schumannianer* in his youth, someone who taught himself how to compose songs in part by mimicking Schumann—who liked *cosas de España*. Wolf *did* select for his *Spanisches Liederbuch* four poems Schumann had set as duets in the *Spanisches Lieder spiel* ("Dereinst, dereinst, o Gedanke mein," "Und schläfst du, mein Mädchen," "Alle gingen, Herz, zur Ruh'," and "Mögen alle bösen Zungen"), but it is my speculation that Wolf saw himself as "correcting" Schumann in these instances. A single poetic persona speaks in each of these poems, and Wolf might not have approved of Schumann's multiplication of singing voices.

In a letter to the Wolf biographer Ernst Decsey, a man named Franz Zweybrück (a writer on Austrian politics and history) claimed to be the agency through which Wolf came to know the *Spanisches Liederbuch*:

> One afternoon Friedrich Eckstein, a close friend of Wolf, came up to me. Wolf was with him. Eckstein asked me if I knew of a collection of really good lyrics which had not yet been set to music, because Wolf was able to find so little that suited him. I thought for a short while, and then asked whether he knew Geibel and Heyse's translations from Spanish and Heyse's from Italian. I recommended the first little book in particular. On the following day I brought my copy of the Spanish translations for Wolf, and he kept the book for several months, if not even longer.[22]

Wolf assuredly knew Schumann's *Spanisches Lieder spiel* before that time; whether he knew the source of Schumann's texts and what his reaction was to the discovery of some of those same poems in the 1852 anthology, we do not know. That Wolf was drawn to "cosas de España" we know from various anecdotes, especially from Eckstein's memoirs.[23] According to this loyal, independently wealthy, multi-talented student of Bruckner and friend of Wolf (it was Eckstein who arranged for the publications of Wolf's first two sets of songs), Wolf loved Calderón's religious dramas and read the Spanish mystics,

[22]Ernst Decsey, *Hugo Wolf*, 4 vols. (Berlin & Leipzig: Schuster & Loeffler, 1903-1906), vol. 2, p. 2.

[23]See Friedrich Eckstein, *Alte unnennbare Tage: Erinnerungen aus siebzig Lehr- und Wanderjahren* (Vienna: Herbert Reichner Verlag, 1936), pp. 178-179 and p. 181.

but Eckstein gives no details, no titles of individual plays or names of Spanish poets. We know that *Don Quixote* was one of Wolf's favorite books,[24] that he loved Tirso de Molina's comedy *Marta la piadosa* (Martha the Pious),[25] and that he first encountered Pedro de Alarcón's *El sombrero de tres picos* (the source of his one completed opera, *Der Corregidor*) in 1888, almost certainly in translation, as Wolf knew little or no Spanish. He might have picked up a bit of the language here and there: in 1894, Wolf befriended a colorful character named Prince Bojidar Karageorgevitch, who sang *habaneras*, *cubanitas*, and *madrileñas* for Wolf to the prince's own guitar accompaniment,[26] and it is possible that both Eckstein, who travelled in Mexico, and the prince could have taught him a little Spanish. But Wolf did not require personal or specialized knowledge of Spain, Italy, or their languages for his own musical enterprise. That he recognized Geibel's and Heyse's Teutonizing of the South, that he himself had no desire to ape pseudo-Spanish or pseudo-Italian strains, is clear in a passage from a letter of 23 December 1892 to his friend Emil Kauffmann, "A warm heart, I can assure you, beats in the small bodies of my youngest children of the South [he was invoking the first songs composed for the *Italienisches Liederbuch*], who cannot, despite appearances, deny their German origins. Yes, their hearts beat in German, although the sun shines on them in Italian (as with France in 'Der Tambour')."[27] Behind the light-hearted rodomontade (composing always made him almost giddily happy) is recognition that the two cultures had different world-views, that whatever one borrows from another culture is transformed by one's own. He wouldn't have it otherwise.

Wolf began work on his third large collection of songs on 28 October 1889, one week after completing the last of the fifty-one Goethe songs, and, in typical fashion, marched through the textual anthology at whirlwind pace. The composition of forty-four complex songs in six months is nothing short of astonishing. One notes that he went back and forth between the secular and sacred songs and that he tended to compose the sacred songs in clusters ("Nun

[24]Hugo Wolf, letter of 5 October 1890, in *Erinnerungen an Hugo Wolf von Gustav Schur, nebst Hugo Wolf's Briefen an Gustav Schur*, ed. Heinrich Werner (Regensburg: G. Bosse, 1922), p. 64.

[25]Hugo Wolf, letter of 10 July 1896, in *Briefe an Melanie Köchert*, ed. Franz Grasberger (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1964), p. 184.

[26]Decsey, *Hugo Wolf*, vol. 2, p. 111 and vol. 3, pp. 116-117.

[27]Hugo Wolf, *Briefe an Emil Kaufmann*, ed. Edmund von Hellmer (Berlin: Fischer, 1903), p. 81.

wandre, Maria," "Die ihr schwebet," and "Die du Gott gebarst" were composed on 2, 4, and 5 November 1889 respectively, while 15, 16, 19, and 21 December 1889 saw the composition of "Führ mich, Kind," "Wunden trägst du," "Ach, wie lang die Seele schlummert," and "Ach, des Knaben Augen," with the great "Mühvoll komm' ich" and "Nun bin ich dein" following after Christmas, on 10 and 15 January 1890). The exception is "Herr, was trägt der Boden hier," composed on 24 November 1889, sandwiched in between secular settings on either side. The ten "geistliche Lieder" are well-placed at the beginning of Wolf's *Spanisches Liederbuch*, and not just because Geibel, Heyse, and their predecessors did so: an announcement is being made at the outset about the tonal intensity of these works.

Wolf set all but three of the "Geistliche Lieder." If his decision to omit Geibel's swan-song and seven wise virgins is understandable on the basis of poetic quality, his omission of the only poem in the anthology by St. John of the Cross is more puzzling. Wolf had no respect for Heyse or Geibel as original poets, and it is therefore a trifle ironic that "Mühvoll komm' ich und beladen" is by Geibel, unbeknownst to Wolf, whose setting of it is one of the masterpieces of the *Spanisches Liederbuch*. Why the composer passed over "In mitternächt'ger Stunde" is anyone's guess, as it is a fine translation of a great poem, but I doubt that Wolf rejected this poem for musical setting on account of its length, as most commentators have speculated; "Geh', Geliebter, geh' jetzt" is almost as long. It is my belief that along the fluid boundary line separating "cycle" from "set" or "collection," the "Geistliche Lieder" are closer to a cycle than a set, and that St. John of the Cross's poem did not fit thematically into Wolf's design. It is also possible to speculate that Wolf could not find himself in accord with the mystic's enraptured metaphors of melding with Christ as with a lover. The anguished consciousness of sin one finds in the "Geistliche Lieder" *did* appeal to him, had already appealed to him in the oeuvre of the sin-obsessed Eduard Mörike. So too had Mörike's "Neue Liebe" (New Love), a poem whose persona, despairing of true love and union with a mortal beloved, resolves to seek just such "mein und Dein" love in God. But there is a difference between the *wish* to become one with God, as in Mörike's poem (and Mörike was more doubter than true believer), and the rapturous union *accomplished* in the final three stanzas of "In mitternächt'ger Stunde":

XIII
(stanzas 6-8 of 8)

An meines Busens Blüte,	At my bosom's blossom
Den ich für ihn zur lautern	which for him I made into a
Wohnung machte,	chaste dwelling,
Entschlief der Liebentglühte,	the love-inflamed one fell asleep
Indeß ich bei ihm wachte	while I sat at his side, waking
Und mit dem Cedernzweig ihm	and fanning coolness toward him
Kühlung fachte.	with a cedar twig.
Und als im Morgenwinde	And when in the morning breeze
Ich spielt' in seinen weichen	I played in the soft ringlets
Lockenringen,	of his hair,
Da fühlt' ich, wie mich linde	I suddenly felt how, soothingly,
Die weißen Arm' umfingen	the white arms embraced me
Daß alle Sinne trunken mir	so that my senses left me and I was
vergingen.	as if drunk.
In Himmelslust verzücket	Exulted in heavenly pleasure
An des Geliebten Lippen durft'	I was permitted to hang at my
ich hangen;	beloved one's lips;
Ich war mir selbst entrücket,	I was beside myself
Und all mein irdisch Bangen	and all my mundane anguish
Unter den Lilien wie ein Traum	vanished under the lilies
zergangen.[28]	like a dream.

A composer may pride himself on being "an objective lyricist"[29] who can assume many guises, as Wolf did, and yet reject poems on the basis of personal predilections and experiences—the choice of poems for musical setting is never disinterested, and it is only logical to assume that a composer's world-view, shaped by his or her genetic inheritance, culture, fears, prejudices, moral judgments, and more, shape such decision-making every bit as much as purely artistic imperatives. St. John of the Cross's metaphors for mystical experience fuse caritas and eros, the language sexual

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[28]Emanuel Geibel und Paul Heyse, *Spanisches Liederbuch* (Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 1852), pp. 20-21.

[29]The phrase comes from a letter Wolf wrote Engelbert Humperdinck on 12 March 1891, eleven months after completing the *Spanisches Liederbuch*. "Put me down as an objective lyricist who can pipe in all keys, who knows how to come to terms with the departed glutton's tune every bit as well as with the rainbow's or the nightingale's" [Wolf's love of *Die Meistersinger* and semi-defiant challenge to Wagner are apparent]. See Decsey, *Hugo Wolf*, vol. 2, p. 77.

in nature, and one wonders whether there is a connection between Wolf's omission of a sexually explicit stanza from "Geh', Geliebter, geh' jetzt" (his only editorial omission in the entire *Spanisches Liederbuch*) and his lack of interest in "In mitternächt'ger Stunde." Sexual content in and of itself did not bother him in the slightest, given his resentment of the hypocritical prudery that had such a pernicious effect on his and Melanie's lives—he had taken great delight in setting Mörike's "Nimmersatte Liebe" and the astonishing "Erstes Liebeslied eines Mädchens" to music, but there were no associations either with Christ or with adulterous passion (too close to home?) in either of those poems. We cannot know how Wolf felt on discovering that he had contracted syphilis in his later teenage years, but hints of anguish peer out from the scant accounts, and a Catholic boyhood would have taught him that the manner of its contraction constituted sin and that his love for Melanie Köchert was also sinful, although he rejected such dogmas in adulthood. That he thought deeply both about the complexities of erotic life and about the spiritual dimension of life is evident in hints from his letters, in the poetry he chose for musical setting, and in his treatment of that poetry.

It may seem strange that an avowed anti-clerical fin-de-siècle composer with Nietzschean leanings (although Wolf did not by any means accept all of Nietzsche) should compose religious songs as exquisite as those in the Mörike and Spanish songbooks, but the oddity is more seeming than real. His mother was devout, and he was brought up as a child to attend mass and observe Catholic practices, but he had lost his faith by the early 1880s, if not before then. Nor did he hide the fact from his mother. In a revealing letter written on 29 April 1892 on the occasion of her name day, Wolf characterized himself as an unbeliever and questioned whether the institution of a name day had any validity amidst the general irreligiosity of modern Christian civilization. "Who still thinks nowadays of saints? Who believes in them?", he tells his mother. So-called pious folk gabble their Our Fathers and rosaries meaninglessly, like the ABCs recited by small schoolchildren, he says, and—this is the crux of the letter—twice states his own Nietzschean belief in godliness as the highest manifestation of pure humanity. "As a tree sinks its roots deep into the earth, the more strongly to reach to the heights, so too must the living word, the presentiment of godliness at the innermost core of human being, take root. Thus is the biblical proverb, 'By their fruits ye shall know them,' verified."[30] The intensity of the language is remarkable. If Wolf was not a "believer" in

[30]*Hugo Wolf. Eine Persönlichkeit in Briefen. Familienbriefe*, ed. Edmund von Hellmer (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1912), pp. 91-92.

the prescriptions and proscriptions of Catholicism, he was unquestionably someone for whom life had a spiritual dimension, beyond the realm of rituals and dogma. It is noteworthy that Wolf's attraction to Alarcón's novel *El niño de la bola* of 1880, translated into German as *Manuel Venegas*, for his second opera was its "dark purple ground of deepest religious feeling."[31] We remember that, of all of Wagner's operas, Wolf was perhaps most strongly affected by *Parsifal*, and the enmeshing of music at the far end of attenuated chromaticism with a drama of spiritual awakening had to be part of its power over him. Art is more at issue in Wagner's last opera than religion, of course, but there are reasons for using religious *Stoff* for one's artistic enterprises, and we can assume that Wolf too would have his own causes to do likewise.

What does it mean that Wolf was so drawn to Spanish themes and that expressions of religious fervor purportedly emanating from Spain had such meaning for him after his boyhood experience of the Catholic Church no longer did? What purposes did the "Geistliche Lieder" serve for this composer? What do they tell us about him? Can one deduce anything at all about a composer's spiritual life from his music? There is nothing Spanish or pseudo-Spanish about these ten songs, none of the guitar-strumming, dance-like rhythmic figures one finds in many of the secular songs (for example, "Und schläfst du, mein Mädchen," "Bitt' ihn, o Mutter, bitte den Knaben," "Sagt, seid Ihr es, feiner Herr"). It is at least possible that Wolf found in the Spanish and Italian songbooks a medium of transference for the inner spiritual experience whose outward manifestations he had rejected (the first ten Spanish songs) and for the emotional undercurrents of his long-drawn-out affair with the married Melanie Köchert (the Italian songbook).[32] There is perhaps a dual current at work in the "Geistliche Lieder," an ebb-and-flow in both directions: by the feint of origins in Spain, the mythic land of mystical intensity, Wolf could safely convey what was *au fond* his own compound of anguish, sense of sinfulness, and longing for belief while engaging in a distant shadow-collaboration with the two poets to make what was formerly Spanish thoroughly Germanic. One might note in the latter regard that Wolf uses the streams of parallel-third intervals found in 19th-century German anthologies of devotional songs for the third, fifth, and sixth songs in the quasi-cycle of

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[31]Hugo Wolf, *Briefe an Oskar Grohe*, ed. Heinrich Werner (Berlin: Fischer, 1905), p. 81.

[32]The songs in a male poetic voice are largely worshipful and adoring, while many of the songs in a woman's poetic voice are comic scoldings of an unsatisfactory lover. That these could be surrogates by which Wolf could speak his love and give Melanie a means to upbraid him seems at least possible.

the "Geistliche Lieder" ("Nun wandre, Maria," "Führ mich, Kind, nach Bethlehem," and "Ach, des Knaben Augen"); this is among the unifying elements one can trace throughout the section, and a carryover from the Mörike religious song, "Zum neuen Jahr." Wolf's first listeners in Germany and Austria would have recognized the device, would have known that it spoke of *their* homeland, not Spain.

One of the most beautiful of the *Spanisches Liederbuch* songs is the seventh, "Mühvoll komm' ich und beladen," which inaugurates a closing group of songs (nos. 7-10) drenched from beginning to end in a sense of sinfulness.

VII

Mühvoll komm' ich und beladen,
Nimm mich an, du Hort der Gnaden!

Sieh, ich komm' in Thränen heiß
Mit demüthiger Geberde,
Dunkel ganz vom Staub der Erde.
Du nur schaffest, daß ich weiß
Wie das Vließ der Lämmer werde.
Tilgen willst du ja den Schaden
Dem, der reuig dich umfaßt;
Nimm denn, Herr, von mir die Last,
Mühvoll komm' ich und beladen.

Laß mich flehend vor dir knie'n,
Daß ich über deine Füße
Nardenduft und Thränen gieße,
Gleich dem Weib, dem du verziehn,
Bis die Schuld wie Rauch zerfließe.
Der den Schächer du geladen:
"Heute noch in Edens Bann
Wirst du sein!" o nimm mich an,
Nimm mich an, du Hort der Gnaden![33]

Wearily I come, and heavy laden,
Receive me, thou treasure-trove of grace!

See, I come with hot tears,
with humble mien,
blackened all with the dust of the earth.
Thou alone can make me as white
as the fleece of lambs.
For thou wilt erase the wrongs
of the one who in penitence embraces thee:
Lord, then take from me my burden;
wearily I come and heavy laden.

Let me kneel in entreaty before thee
that I may pour over thy feet
fragrant oil and tears,
like the woman whom thou forgave,
until my sins vanish like smoke.
Thou who didst invite the thief,
"This day shalt thou be with me
in Paradise", o accept me,
receive me, thou treasure-trove of grace!

To the discriminating eye, the poem *qua* poem is not a great one, certainly not of an equal with Geibel's very fine translation of St. John of the Cross, but there are reasons why Wolf would be drawn to it. There *are* poetic felicities, such as Geibel's ingenious use of a restricted rhyme scheme and an unusual

[33]Geibel and Heyse, *Spanisches Liederbuch*, p. 12.

nine-line stanza with a refrain, while the poetic word "Hort" might have struck the Wagner-steeped Wolf as a reminiscence of the Nibelungs' "Hort" converted to religious metaphor. He might also have been struck by the fact that the persona implores Christ in an inner plea, not as part of a liturgical ritual, and that the sense of sinfulness is personal, not doctrinal. Might there also have been an underlying sense of identification, perhaps hidden below surface awareness? He already knew what it was to feel "dunkel ganz vom Staub der Erde" and must have known, as do most thinking adults, the longing to have sins and offences against others vanish like smoke.

He might also have thought, at some level, of Melanie. It is perhaps daring and certainly speculative to propose that a poem whose persona reenacts in his or her soul the penitence of "the woman taken in adultery," of Mary Magdalen bathing Christ's feet in scented oil and penitent tears, would have seemed a matter of personal import to Wolf, but the supposition *can* be made. Wolf's and Melanie's affair had to be kept secret from Melanie's husband, the jeweller Heinrich Köchert, until a crisis in 1894 brought the affair out into the open because the consequences for Melanie and the three Köchert daughters could have been severe, had Heinrich reacted with outrage and rejection (he, an extraordinary and generous creature, did not). That Wolf and Melanie knew what those consequences might be is evident in Wolf's gift to her of the prison poetry and letters of the Swiss artist Karl Stauffer (1857-1891), who had committed suicide in the wake of imprisonment for adultery with the wife of a powerful Swiss politician's son. The wife, too, committed suicide after her furious husband's family first incarcerated her in various insane asylums and then banished her to disgrace and poverty. "We," Wolf tells Melanie in a letter of 6 October 1894, "are not numbered among those moral cowards who shrink timidly from every natural emotion and try anxiously to paste fig leaves over all nakedness."[34] This is from one of Wolf's "public letters" to her, not the private letters destroyed after the lovers' deaths, and Wolf therefore knew that Heinrich Köchert could, probably would, read the passage. "The mysteries of these kinds of psychological occurrences" is how Wolf refers to the phenomenon of erotic passion in this letter, and the wording is remarkable. That Melanie loved him deeply and vice versa cannot be doubted from what remains of the chronicle, but it is also evident that her qualms were real. When he was no longer there to convince her that this love was worth the mammoth price in anxiety, secrecy, betrayal, and the certain

[34]Hugo Wolf, *Letters to Melanie Köchert*, ed. Franz Grasberger, trans. Louise McClelland Urban (New York: Schirmer Books, 1991), p. 134.

condemnation of Church and State should the matter become public, she fell prey to depression, calling herself "sinful" and "a bad wife." Ultimately, she too, like Karl Stauffer and Lydia Welti, killed herself in 1906. It is inconceivable that such strong feelings would not have arisen while both lovers were still alive, that Wolf would not have found it necessary to comfort her for her heavier burden—she was the adulterous one, after all, beset by her society's restrictions on women and by the double-standard regnant in judgments upon adultery. Is it then so inconceivable that Wolf would have been all the more intensely drawn to "Mühvoll komm' ich und beladen" for its plea that even "the woman taken in adultery" might be received into heaven and relieved of the nearly-unbearable weight of mental anguish?

What did Wolf do with Geibel's grief-laden poem, and what might it mean? Geibel, one notes, used trochaic tetrameters for "Mühvoll komm' ich und beladen," the same rhythmic pattern he also chose for six of the poems translated from Spanish originals ("Die du Gott gebarst, du Reine," "Führ' mich, Kind, nach Bethlehem," "Ach, des Knaben Augen sind," "Ach, wie lang die Seele schlummert!", "Herr, was trägt der Boden hier," and "Wunden trägst du, mein Geliebter," or nos. 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10). All of the sin-obsessed songs are thus laden with trochees, not as common in German or English poetry as are iambs, but perfect for this context because trochees create a heavier aural impression. Here, they reflect the doubled weight of the subject matter: that of the suffering, guilt-laden sinner and the suffering, burden-laden Savior. Wolf clearly understood the centrality of weightiness to the poem and found various ways to translate the unbearable burden of sin into musical elements, such as the prosody of the opening line of the poem. Trochees begin on the accented syllable of the disyllabic foot, or, most commonly in music, on the downbeat, but Wolf sounds "Müh – [voll]" on the third beat in triple meter, sustaining the complex vowels through the barline separating mm. 2 and 3 (the first instance of the word, which recurs in mm. 30-31 transposed but otherwise the same). When the pianist plays the root-position Neapolitan chord of E♭ major on the downbeat of m. 3, the striking heaviness of the harmony—all the more a "surprise" to the ear because of the tonal deflection so soon after the beginning of the song—creates a "pulse" beneath the sustained syllable in the vocal line. The conjunction of rhythmic gesture and tonal shock creates an unforgettable sense of gravity; no one could hear this and think that anything other than humanity's gravest concerns were at issue. Geibel doubles the weight by invoking it twice in the first line and in two different words, "mühvoll" and "beladen," so Wolf does likewise, treating

"beladen" differently. The accented middle syllable, "be – *la* – den" this time
is placed on the downbeat and prolonged, but what is most remarkable about
the prosody in m. 4 is the way the vocal line droops under its symbolic weight,
falling through a scalar descent such that each new lower pitch sounds on
weak beats in the measure. The impression is of a vocal line which tries to
stand upright, to maintain the crucial pitch A♭ (of which, more in a moment),
but cannot do so and buckles slowly, heroically, under insuperable weight.

Harmony is theology in this lied-world, however, and it is the tonal twists-
and-turns which tell most acutely both of anguish and the hope—sometimes
deferred, frustrated, or denied—for grace. Wolf traffics massively, here and
elsewhere, in what Arnold Schoenberg called "suspended [aufgehoben]
tonality,"[35] an umbrella-term for a variety of procedures ranging from a latent
or unexpressed tonal center, prolonged absence of the tonal center, passages
in which tonally polyvalent chords like diminished sevenths predominate, the
interjection of a brief series of chords whose relationship to each other and to
the tonal center is ambiguous, and much more. "Mühvoll komm' ich und
beladen" is in G minor (a tonality with a long history of tragic associations by
that time), but Wolf ensures that the sense of surety in G minor vanishes very
quickly. Indeed, it is already in doubt by the time the singer enters. One notes
even in the diatonic first measure Wolf's durational and rhythmic emphasis
on the dissonant supertonic seventh chord in first inversion—or is it a C-minor
triad with an added sixth degree? When the tonic chord on the downbeat of m.
2 is followed by an F-minor minor-seventh chord, we think it might be iv in
C minor, but the "tonic" can be heard simultaneously as the mediant of E♭
major, the F-minor seventh chord thus a supertonic. (One notes the heaviness
of the chord voicing in the middle and low registers as truly "beladen.") When
the singer enters, he or she chants on a repeated A♭, as if too weary, too
oppressed to devise lyrical melody (this is true of much of the song, whose
phrases tend to begin with quasi-declamatory chanting and then descend
wearily), the obsessive repetition of the pitch conveying its importance—we
expect the key of A♭ at some point, especially when E♭ is tonicized. The
darkness of E♭ minor followed by III+ in root position (typical of Wolf[36]) in

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[35]Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, trans. Roy Carter (Berkeley, CA: University of
California Press, 1978), p. 384.

[36]Timothy McKinney, "Harmony in the Songs of Hugo Wolf," Ph.D. dissertation, University
of North Texas, 1989, p. 30, points out another example of the augmented mediant as an
essential harmony—not the result of passing motion in the voice-leading—in "Der neue
Amadis" from the Goethe lieder.

m. 5, mm. 5-6 a variation of mm. 1-2, is also wonderfully expressive of a heavy burden; we hear that same augmented triad in root position over and over. This is the progression of pleading at its most intense, and Wolf's persona repeats this cry that Christ might receive him, shifting it to different tonal locations but otherwise keeping the passage the same. When Wolf alternates ♭VI⁷/A♭ chords with the dominant of A♭ in mm. 9-16, we expect the advent of A♭ at some point all the more, especially given the threefold repetition; this composer knew that prayers are repeated, and usually literally, in hopes that a divinity will listen. We cannot doubt the urgency, the fervor, of pleas repeated in so obsessive a manner. The mirror-image voice-exchange between the right hand and the voice in mm. 10, 12, and 14 conveys something of the sense of twisting, torturous inner sensations, of obsession and flux at one and the same time.

But A♭ major does not come, this after all the care Wolf has expended on making us expect it. Indeed, it never comes, although the strong suggestion of it links this song with "Ach, des Knaben Augen" just before it. (This sixth song is in F major, with a brief, beautiful passage—three measures only—on a clear A♭ major at the words "Säh' er dann sein Bild darin." The "Bild" of the Christ Child shines behind the tortured plea to the Savior in "Mühvoll komm' ich," and it is sad to note how clear and warm A♭ is in the sixth song, while the longing for it never achieves arrival or clear articulation in the seventh song.[37]) Instead, there is another typically Wolfian maneuver in mm. 14-15, an enharmonic transformation at the culmination of the words "dunkel ganz vom Staub der *Erde*." The typically Wagnerian device of elision, by which an arrival is evaded and turns instead into a beginning point for motion forward to another, different tonal location, becomes here a way to convey in music the most intense desire for cleansing from sin. A♭ is respelled as G♯ in an E-major harmony (the extensively prolonged dominant of songs 2-4), the starting point for a progression leading ultimately to one of the few clear, huge, massive points of arrival in the song: fortissimo C major in m. 25, for the plea "Nimm denn, Herr, von mir die Last." The desire for transformation, in Wolf's imagining, precedes the spoken wish for it, is audible in the piano in m. 15 before it is made verbal. Like Schubert, Wolf endows the piano with

[37]Margaret Louise Kuhl, in her 1984 D.M.A. dissertation from the University of British Columbia, "On Performing Wolf: Problems Inherent in the *Geistliche Lieder* from the *Spanisches Liederbuch*," argues paradoxically that the set is not a cycle because it exhibits too many connections, its extreme cohesiveness verging on monotony (in her opinion). I cannot agree.

a soul possessed of wordless speech; if the significance of certain passages for piano alone is dependent upon prior words-and-music (for example, the piano in mm. 33-36 pleading "Nimm mich an ... nimm denn, Herr," but without text), others *precede* fuller definition by the poet.[38]

Everything in Wolf's setting of the refrain and first stanza comes back in the second stanza, but transposed to new, temporary, and unstable tonal locations, in an exact corollary to the poetic persona, who makes the same plea over and over but with different examples, different words. The plea that Christ see the penitent persona from mm. 9-15, the plea which never reaches A♭, becomes the related plea to enact penitence in mm. 37-47, a plea which never reaches A minor, and the immense cry to be accepted and received moves from C major to B♭ major, while the entire song ends on the unresolved dominant of its ephemeral tonic G minor. That dominant is unmistakably linked to the beginning of the next song on bare, unharmonized octave Gs, and this enchaining of one open-ended song with another conveys, among other features of the "Geistliche Lieder," Wolf's understanding of the songs as a pilgrimage. This journey, this quest for Christ, does not end; there is no surety for the persona of this group of songs (more cycle than set) that a *lieto fine* is impending. The last song, "Wunden trägst du, mein Geliebter," which bespeaks the Crucifixion as the source of salvation, is likewise open-ended, concluding on its dominant and thus pointing the way to a future beyond the end of all sound. What that outcome might be, Wolf's music does not say. His persona desperately seeks refuge in the divine and journeys far and wide to find it, but, unlike Wagner's *Parsifal*, does not reach a sure harbor. What Wolf underscores by every means at his considerable disposal is the intensity of human spiritual desire, but the "Wahrheit bis zur Grausamkeit" (truth to the point of terror) that was his artistic credo forbade, one can speculate, pat answers and false promises.

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[38]Wolf's artful chord-spacing merits further examination. For pianists who, like me, do not have giant hands, the voicing of the left-hand part in mm. 25 and 27—the C-major triads—is a graphic symbol of something crucial in the text. Wolf was clearly struck by the word "umfasst," "embraces"; in the wide wing-span of those C-major chords (one hears Haydn's "Es werde Licht!" in the distance), he conveys both the clarity, simplicity, and blazing light of longed-for purification in Christ and the difficulty of its mortal attainment. The spacing is even more difficult in mm. 55 and 57, when the temporary tonal locale is B♭.

From Paganism to Orthodoxy to Theosophy: Reflections of Other Worlds in the Piano Music of Rachmaninov and Scriabin

Anatole Leikin

Russian Romantic piano music contains a peculiar blend of musical characteristics that sound exotic and alluringly attractive to the Western listener while at the same time appealing to the most deeply rooted sentiments of the Russian listener. What constitutes the quality that the Westerners perceive as "otherness" and the Russians feel as their inseparable own? One aspect of it is the folk-music component, and it has been described and analyzed by many authors; the other aspect, traceable in the religious undercurrents of Russian piano music, is much less explored. These undercurrents, however, became so important toward the end of the 19th century that to neglect them would render any attempt at truly comprehending the piano music of Rachmaninov and Scriabin woefully incomplete.

With all its later glory, Russian piano music had inauspicious beginnings. For several decades following the first appearance of the fortepiano in Russia in the 1770s, piano music by native Russian composers was written within the boundaries of the 18th-century Classical idiom. And yet, many first experiments in piano composition, despite their modest and unassuming appearance, were already marked by the composers' desire to differ from their Western precursors and contemporaries.

Eighteenth-century Russian piano composers were seeking stylistic independence through national folk music. The birth of Russian piano music took place in 1780, when Vasily Trutovsky (ca. 1740-1810) published two sets of variations on Russian folk songs. A brilliant performer on the *gusli*, an ancient Russian psaltery, Trutovsky used many patterns of melodic ornamentation and accompanimental formulas that were typical of that popular folk instrument but at times sounded simplistic on the piano. Other composers, such as V. S. Karaulov, P. N. Engalychyov, and O. A. Kozlovsky, followed Trutovsky with their own sets of variations or piano arrangements of Russian folk songs, increasing the difficulty and elaborateness of texture and making

it more idiomatic for the piano. Dance music for the piano (encompassing minuets, waltzes, mazurkas, polonaises, écossaises) was also highly popular among music lovers, especially since dances were played not only for listening enjoyment but also to accompany actual dancing.

Dmitry Bortniansky (1751-1825), arguably the most prominent Russian composer before Glinka, wrote several keyboard sonatas. Although indicated as *cembalo* sonatas, they contained many new textural and dynamic features characteristic of fortepiano writing. Bortniansky's sonatas (only three have survived) were generally close to the styles of J.C. Bach and the early Mozart; additionally, however, these sonatas were marked by certain rhythmic patterns of Russian and Ukrainian folk dances in the faster movements and by the occasional use of Russian and Ukrainian folk-song inflections in the slower pieces. Lev Gurilyov, the father of the prominent Russian art-song composer Alexander Gurilyov, along with variations, dances, and a sonata for piano, wrote a set consisting of twenty-four Preludes in all the major and minor keys followed by a single fugue imbued with melodic traits of Russian folk songs (1810).

During that time, piano music was mostly written by minor professional and amateur composers. Bortniansky concentrated his compositional efforts on Italian operas (he received his musical education in Italy) and on liturgical music. For most of the 19th century, leading Russian composers continued to regard piano music as a sideline, as an area of entertaining salon pieces. They apparently felt that in order to both create a national school of composition and prove themselves as serious composers, they had to concentrate on monumental genres: national operas, symphonies, and tone poems.

Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857), who is rightly credited with the creation of the Russian national operatic and orchestral styles, in his piano music limited himself to short salon dances and a few nocturnes modeled after Russian art song (*romans*), of which he was a great master. Glinka was a student of the celebrated Irish pianist and composer John Field, who had lived in Russia since 1803. Among Field's other Russian students was Ivan Laskovsky (1799-1855), who wrote music in the style of Field and Chopin: scherzos, waltzes, mazurkas, nocturnes, a ballade, and, of course, variations. Alexander Gurilyov (1803-1858), another student of Field, was the author of numerous *romansy* (art songs) and piano dances and variations.

The romance, or the urban song for music making at the home (the so-called *bytovoi romans*, or domestic romance) was a new phenomenon in Russian musical life in the second quarter of the 19th century. Many

romances were anonymous; they were transmitted orally and, just like folk songs, underwent many variant forms.[1] For a long time, the romance had not been endorsed as a genuine Russian folk art because its roots included not only Russian traditional folk tunes, but also Western music (especially Italian arias) and Gypsy songs. The *bytovoi* romance, however, was so widely popular that it deeply affected piano writing. Many of these romances were accompanied on the piano, and perhaps just as many romances, if not more, on the guitar. Numerous piano arrangements of romances incorporated both the melody and the various types of piano and guitar accompaniment. Almost simultaneously, variations on popular romances joined the ranks of the earlier variations on folk tunes.

The Russian attitude toward piano music as an amateur salon entertainment changed when the brothers Anton (1829-1894) and Nikolai (1835-1881) Rubinstein established the Russian piano school, along with the first Russian conservatories in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Since then, Balakirev, Borodin, Musorgsky, Lyadov, and Glazunov in St. Petersburg, as well as Tchaikovsky in Moscow, increasingly turned their attention to piano composition. These developments culminated in two pinnacles of Russian Romantic piano music: Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943) and Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915).

Until the second half of the 19th century, the originality of Russian piano music was determined by its closeness to the national folk idiom. The initial arrangements of folk tunes and romances were followed by original piano compositions that carried many stylistic traits of both folk music and romances. It was only when piano music graduated from home entertainment to high art that a new component was introduced into the world of piano music: religion. At first, the religious element was reflected in character scenes: a procession of clergy in Musorgsky's "The Great Gate of Kiev" from his *Pictures at an Exhibition*, a prayer in Tchaikovsky's *Children's Album*, a short piece by Borodin entitled *In the Monastery*, etc. But gradually, religious undercurrents penetrated into the music of the new generation of Russian composers, especially Rachmaninov and Scriabin, even though, between the two of them, there is only one piano composition that actually has a religious title: the finale from Rachmaninov's First Piano Suite for two pianos, "*Svetly prazdnik*" (Bright, or Easter Festival). The main difficulty one encounters in discerning religious influences in the music of Rachmaninov and

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[1]Some variants of the romances, as well as some variants of folk songs, were disseminated in manuscript copies among music lovers or , occasionally, even published.

Scriabin is that these influences and their realization in musical texts go far beyond programmatic character scenes that merely imitate Orthodox liturgy.

There are two interrelated areas of Russian religious life that influenced both Rachmaninov and Scriabin. First, Russian pre-Revolutionary life was so thoroughly infused with religion that neither composer could possibly escape being affected by various aspects of religious beliefs, mentality, and life style. Secondly, attributes of the liturgical musical idiom seeped into Russian secular music up until the October Revolution of 1917; these attributes also affected the music of Rachmaninov and Scriabin, although in different ways.

Russian religious life has formed as a complex blend of Byzantine Orthodoxy, robust pagan traditions, and Eastern mysticism. Since its makeup and sway over the Russian people were so different from its counterpart in the 19th-century West, one needs to take a closer look at the Christian Orthodox roots, pagan-Christian syncretism, and the Russian mysticism emanating both from the Orthodox Church and from various non-conformist sects.

The Christian period of Russian history began with Grand Prince Vladimir of Kiev (c. 956-1015). A member of the Viking (or the Varyag, as they were known to the Slavs) ruling dynasty of Kievan Russia, Vladimir, the third son of Grand Prince Svyatoslav, came to power after an intense struggle among Svyatoslav's sons for the succession. Soon after his accession to the throne, Vladimir recognized the need to consolidate his power and to unite this state —which was comprised of loosely connected Slavonic tribes, Viking warriors, and Finnish hunters—with a common culture and religion. He first attempted to do so through the so-called "pagan reform" of 980, which asserted the primacy of the Slavonic god Perun over the other gods.[2] However, the Slavs resisted the idea of appointing one supreme god among their deities; further-more, different regions often preferred other gods to Perun (thus the Northern Slavs, for instance, were particularly loyal to Volos the cattle god).

A few years later, sensing a failure of his pagan reform, Vladimir began searching for a solution among outside religions. There had already been converts to other religions in Kiev, and Vladimir decided to send envoys to the countries where those religions were practiced. Christianity seemed particu-larly attractive to Vladimir because he liked the ritual of communion—not only because of his famous saying that "drinking is a joy of Russia," but also

[2] I. Froianov, A. Dvornichenko, and I. Krivosheev, "The Introduction of Christianity in Russia and Pagan Traditions," Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, ed., *Russian Traditional Culture: Religion, Gender, and Customary Law* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), pp. 3-5.

because that ritual was close to the pagan feasts, which were an important institution in the life of Kievan Russia.[3]

The reason why the Western European version of Christianity was rejected also had much to do with the pagan traditions. Slavonic worship included various theatrical presentations, colorful processions, and spectacular ceremonies. Joyfulness and beauty were paramount criteria in Vladimir's quest for a new religion. As his envoys reported after their trip to the West, "We saw in the churches many worship services, but nowhere did we see beauty." But when the Russian envoys witnessed the services in Constantinople, they were stunned: "We did not know if we were on earth or in heaven: for there is no such beauty on earth, and we are not able to describe it; all that we know is that god dwells with man there, and their worship is better than that of all the other countries."[4]

The conversion of the Kiev population by Byzantine priests began in 988, and Christianity was relatively quickly established in Southern Russia where it met no resistance. But in the rest of the country the process of Christianization took a long time, and was still ongoing in the countryside during the 15th, 16th, and even the 17th centuries.[5]

Many theologians who analyze the character of the Orthodox religion note that it is essentially built on a dichotomy of two extremes in their mystical unity: transcendence into eternity through dying. The whole fervor of the Eastern Church is concentrated upon the glory of Resurrection. It is celebrated with an ecstatic joy and extreme exaltation that are the most definitive and controlling features in the Orthodox church. At the same time, this rapturous ascent into eternity can only be achieved through death, even though death is at once "already conquered, the relentless cosmic laws are suppressed, [...] the whole world and our bodies also are *in spe, in potentia*, already partakers of eternal life."[6] As the famed Easter chant (quoted by Rimsky-Korsakov in his Easter overture, *Svetly prazdnik*, and by Rachmaninov in his *Svetly prazdnik* from the First Suite for two pianos) states, "Christ is risen, overcoming death with death!" Easter and its fervent jubilant celebration of

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[3]Froianov et al., "The Introduction of Christianity in Russia...," p. 6.

[4]Froianov et al., "The Introduction of Christianity in Russia...," p. 7.

[5]V. Vlasov, "The Christianization of the Russian Peasants," in *Russian Traditional Culture: Religion, Gender, and Customary Law*, p. 16.

[6]Nicholas Arseniev, *Mysticism and the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Bladimir Seminary Press, 1979), pp. 31-32.

Divine Transfiguration is the climactic centerpiece of the Orthodox church year. Every year the extended and elaborate Easter services arouse the worshipers' emotions to the point of ecstasy. The Eastern tradition has never distinguished between mysticism and theology, between personal experiences of the divine mysteries and the dogma affirmed by the church.[7] In 16th-century Russia, when Sunday, the day of rest, was named *voskresenie*, or "resurrection"—a term still used in Russia today—a representation of Easter was extended to every week of the year.

However, the eternal transfiguration is preceded by the act of dying, which is not only unavoidable but also necessary, and this explains such a common phenomenon in Russia as the mortification of the flesh. To give an example, the ascetic Kapiton, the founder of a monastery, ate only once every other day; his meal consisted of a little stale piece of bread and some raw vegetables, taken at sundown. He slept as little as possible, never lying down but always sitting or standing. All his waking hours he spent either working or singing prayers.[8] A uniquely Russian form of ascetic hermitage was *stolpnichestvo* (from *stolp*, or pillar). A hermit *stolpnik* would go to the highest point of a mountain or hill and stand there, without sitting down, until the end of his days, exposed to all the elements of the harsh Russian climate. He would be brought only minimal amounts of food and water to sustain his life. As Thomas Merton writes in his introduction to Bolshakoff's *Russian Mystics*, while Russian mysticism was a theology not of suffering but of transfiguration, this theology of resurrection and ultimate joy was firmly rooted in repentance and tears.[9]

During the Christianization of Russia, many pagan traditions were not displaced; instead, they formed underlying layers for the new Christian traditions. For example, the pagan worship of the sun included the ritual circle dance, *khorovod*. This pagan cult dance, which was still a popular Russian folk dance in the 19th century, moved in the deasil direction, i.e., the same direction as the sun. For a long time, The Russian Orthodox church used the deasil direction during wedding rites and processions of the cross around the church, contrary to the Christian norm, and it was not until 1656 that the

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[7]Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd, 1968), p. 8.

[8]N. Veletskaia, "Forms of Transformation of Pagan Symbolism in the Old Believer Tradition," Mandelstam Balzer, ed., *Russian Traditional Culture: Religion, Gender, and Customary Law*, p. 58.

[9]Sergius Bolshakoff, *Russian Mystics* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977), p. xiii.

Christian correct ritual was restored under Patriarch Nikon.[10] Similarly, the new Christian notion of the devil did not replace the ancient throng of the *nechistaya sila*, literally the "unclean" or evil force, but was simply added to it. The pagan *nechistaya sila* included various malevolent non-human beings: spirits of the water (*vodyanoy*), of the forest (*leshy*), of the swamp (*kikimora*), of the house (*domovoy*), etc., and a great many Russians in the 19th century continued to believe in those.

When Russian nationalist composers became interested in pagan images of old Russia and represented them in their operas and programmatic orchestral music, the *nechistaya sila*, along with its cohorts, sorcerers and witches, received a non-human, that is to say, a non-diatonic treatment. Glinka, in his opera *Ruslan i Ludmila* (1842), extensively used whole-tone scales and augmented triads for a depiction of the evil sorcerer, Chernomor. Even today, Russian musicians still refer to the whole-tone scale as *gamma Chernomora*, or Chernomor's scale. Rimsky-Korsakov applied the octatonic scale, built on alternating whole- and half-steps, to portray fantastic creatures in his orchestral fantasy *Sadko* (1867). Since then this scale has been known in Russia as the Rimsky-Korsakov scale.

All this constitutes the beginning of the long-standing Russian tradition of representing the supernatural in music. Many of Rimsky-Korsakov's operas, Musorgsky's orchestral fantasy *Night on the Bald Mountain*, as well as his "Gnome" and "Baba-Yaga" (a forest witch) from *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Liadov's orchestral pieces *Baba-Yaga* and *Kikimora*, and numerous other compositions continue this tradition through the music of Scriabin (see below) and Stravinsky.[11]

The whole-tone scale, the augmented triad, and the octatonic scale have not acquired similar semantic connotations in Western music. Perhaps the only tangible connotation of the augmented triad found in the West is that of a moral quandary or physical illness, such as the soul-corroding doubts of Faust in Liszt's *Faust Symphony*, the unhealed wound of Amfortas and the self-inflicted mutilation of Klingsor in Wagner's *Parsifal*, or the mortal illness of a child in Mahler's Fourth Symphony.

Another essential component of Russian religious life is liturgical music. For many centuries after Vladimir had brought the Byzantine liturgy to Russia, it consisted of monophonic singing with no instrumental accompaniment.

[10]Vlasov, "The Christianization of the Russian Peasants," pp. 24-25.

[11]Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 85.

Multi-voiced singing was introduced into Russian liturgy only in the 17th century. The entire body of the Orthodox liturgy is based on eight modes (*glas*) which have nothing in common with the modes of the Latin West. Each Eastern mode is not a scale but rather a collection of motifs out of which entire melodies are created. During the first week of the church year, which begins at Easter, chants in the first mode are performed; during the second week, melodies in the second mode are sung, and so on until the eighth week. After the eighth week the entire succession of modes is repeated again and again. In the 6th century all Byzantine chants in all eight modes were compiled into a collection called the *Octoechos*; two centuries later St. John of Damascus edited and expanded it. The Russian version of the *Octoechos* was developed in the 15th century.

The musical œuvres of Rachmaninov and Scriabin differ from each other as sharply as the two men themselves. The only links between these two antipodes are that they were classmates at Nicolai Zverev's music studio and at the Moscow Conservatory, and they went on to become leading composers-pianists of their time. Correspondingly, while both Rachmaninov and Scriabin inevitably absorbed the major components of Russian religiosity, the role and the share of each such component in their music as well as the end results were quite dissimilar.

The Eastern mystic dichotomy of the two extremes—asceticism and death as the inevitable first stage of achieving the sublime joy of eternal life—has a tangible presence in Rachmaninov's music. The composer, a religious man, found an artistic equivalent of the first, ascetic member of this dichotomy in the mysterious and austere music of medieval Russia. One has to keep in mind, of course, that medieval Russia was not as far removed from a 19th-century Russian as medieval Europe was from a 19th-century Western European. Russia remained a medieval country throughout the 17th century, until the time of Peter the Great, and the Russian countryside was medieval in its religion and mentality until its emancipation from serfdom in 1861. For Rachmaninov, the foremost manifestation of medieval asceticism was the ancient *znamenny* chant. The term *znamenny* refers to the neumatic notation adopted from the 9th-century Byzantine music (*znamya* means "sign"). Rachmaninov himself admitted that the austere chants of the *Octoechos* had fascinated him since his childhood.[12] The Russian composer and organist Alexander Goedike remembers this about Rachmaninov:

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[12]Vera Briantseva, *S. V. Rachmaninov* (Moscow: Sovetsky Kompositor, 1976), p. 455.

> He loved church singing very much and often, even in winter, would get up at seven o'clock in the morning and, in the dark, would hire a cab to go usually to Taganka, to the Andronyev monastery, where he would stand in the half-dark huge church through the entire liturgy, listening to the austere ancient chants from the *Octoechos*, sung by the monks in parallel fifths.[13]

Russian traditional liturgical chants had many restrictions—monophony, a narrow range, predominantly stepwise melodic motion, confinement to the eight modes—but these restrictions were compensated by a richness of variant development. Each motivic element of the "glas" system exists in many melodic and rhythmic variants, which can be heard either within one chant or recognized as such in different pieces. These slight variative modifications particularly often involve compressions or extensions of phrase beginnings and/or endings. Such subtly fluid variability, undoubtedly, also attracted Rachmaninov. At the end of the 19th century in Russia there was a renewed interest in ancient sacred chants, lead by the musical paleontologist Stepan Smolensky. In addition to being the Director of the Moscow Synodal School, Smolensky taught church music at the Moscow Conservatory. Rachmaninov took his class in 1890-91, and his interest in the chant peaked as a result of this exposure.

Rachmaninov masterfully assimilated the style of church music in his *Liturgy of St. John Chrisostom*, op. 31. For his *All-Night Vigil*, op. 37, the composer used nine old chants and six newly composed ones that he himself characterized as "conscious counterfeits." A great many of his secular melodies, while not taken from the body of the chants, are strongly influenced by it. Iosif Samuilovich Yasser has found a striking similarity between the ancient chant *"Grob tvoy spase voini steregushchii"* (Thy coffin, Savior, soldiers are guarding) and the opening theme of Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto (see Examples 1a and 1b below):

As Yasser wrote in his memoir, a further detailed musical analysis not only confirmed the correctness of his first impression, but also established a far deeper organic connection between both melodies. What still remained unclear for Yasser was whether Rachmaninov consciously appropriated the chant melody or was subconsciously influenced by it while composing the Concerto. In order to clarify this point, Yasser wrote a letter to Rachmaninov in which he purposely did not mention his finding but simply asked a general

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[13]Translated from *Vospominaniya o Rachmaninove* [Reminiscences about Rachmaninov], ed. Z. A. Apetian (Moscow: Muzyka, 1988), vol 2, pp. 11-12.
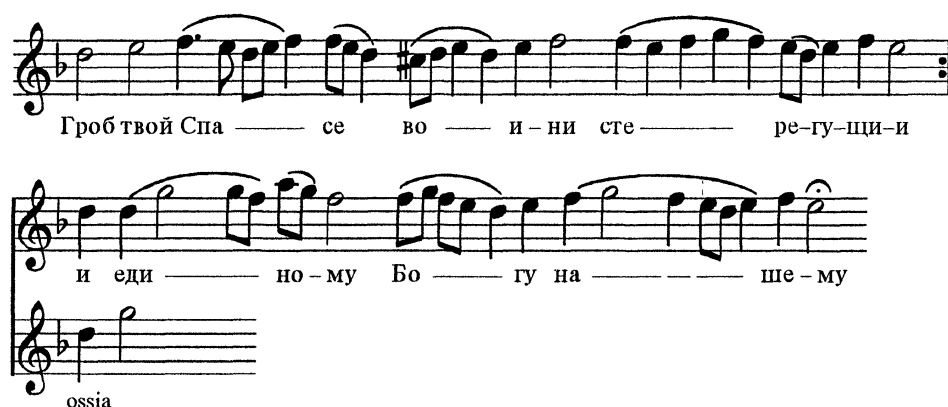
Example 1a: Chant "Thy coffin"

Example 1b: Rachmaninov, Third Piano Concerto, opening theme

question, whether or not Rachmaninov had used for his melody any tune from the folk or church repertoires. Rachmaninov answered that he did not quote from any source, but rather tried to "sing" the melody on the piano the way singers would sing it.[14] Rachmaninov's reply confirmed Yasser's assumption that the composer inadvertently reproduced the familiar chant from *All-Night Vigil* in his Concerto.

Other melodies of Rachmaninov that are modeled after the old chants can be found in such works as Etude-Tableau op. 33 no. 1; the middle sections of Etude-Tableau op. 39 no. 9 and of Prelude op. 23 no. 5; episodes in Etude-Tableau op. 39 no. 7; the principal theme of the Second Piano Concerto; and Prelude op. 32 no. 4. The finale of the Second Piano Concerto is based on a motif from the first movement of Rachmaninov's earlier sacred concerto, "O Mother of God Perpetually Praying."

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[14]Iosif Yasser, "Moyo obshchenie s Rachmaninovym," in *Vospominaniya o Rachmaninove* [Reminiscences about Rachmaninov], ed. Z. A. Apetian (Moscow: Muzyka, 1988), vol 2, pp. 369-370, 525-527.

The ascetic aspect of the mystic dichotomy is not limited to ancient chant and its stylizations in Rachmaninov's works. The somber presence in his music of the "death" component resulted in a preoccupation with the *Dies irae*, the "death motif," that was unparalleled in any other composer, Russian or West European. The list of works incorporating the *Dies irae* is vast. It includes the Waltz from the Second Suite for two pianos; the Sonata for Piano and Cello, op. 19; the finale from his First Piano Sonata, op. 28; the second movement from his Second Piano Sonata, op. 36; the majority of the second set of Etudes-Tableaux, op 39; Variations on a Theme of Corelli, op. 42, and every composition after that. Interestingly, Rachmaninov did not adopt the *Dies irae* motif directly from Catholic liturgy. In fact, before 1931 he was not aware of either the entire chant or its text. What he knew until then were quotations of the *Dies irae* in the music of Berlioz, Liszt, Saint-Saëns, Tchaikovsky, Musorgsky, and others, the occasional use of the chant in Russian liturgy, and its powerful symbolism of death.[15]

At the same time, Rachmaninov introduced into his works the joyful component of the mystic dichotomy, although arguably not as often as its "death" counterpart. In Russia the most ebullient, most celebratory sound is that of church bells. Instruments are not allowed inside the Orthodox church; thus much of the creative energy of Russian musicians has been channeled toward the only instrumental accompaniment permitted for the service: the bells.

The diversity of bells in pre-Revolutionary Russia was extraordinary. Many individual bells had personal names and acquired not only regional but also national fame. The art of bell making and bell pealing was flourishing. The lives of the Russian people were accompanied by the ringing of bells on every possible occasion. This ringing was highly specialized and connected with various liturgical feasts and services, as well as secular events. Alarm bells warned people of an approaching danger: an enemy attack, fire, or the plague. The "*vechevoy*" bell summoned a community to a meeting. The "blizzard" bells helped travelers find their way when there was no visibility. The procession to an execution was accompanied by a bell. The "*krasny*" ("red," or beautiful) ringing sounded during celebrations, and victorious troops returning home were also met with the *krasny* ringing.

The festive use of bells, especially that of the Easter bells, was particularly elaborate and jubilant in Russia. The Easter celebration in Moscow, for example, began at midnight, when the deep and powerful voice

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[15]Yasser, "Moyo obshchenie s Rachmaninovym," pp. 356-358.

of the *Uspensky* bell from the "Ivan the Great" bell tower boomed through the city. It was gradually joined by hundreds of larger and smaller bells tolling from the city's numerous cathedrals and churches, forming sundry intricate rhythmic and pitch patterns, until the air reverberated with a colossal bell symphony.

To be sure, Rachmaninov also paid his respects to somber bell ringing; he himself mentioned an imitation of funereal church bells in Etude-Tableau op. 39 no. 7. Similarly mournful bell tolling can be heard in his Prelude op. 32 no. 4. Yet in spite of his customarily glum disposition, the composer wrote a surprisingly large number of exuberant pieces infused with ecstatically festive bell ringing: Polichinelle op 3; Preludes op. 23 no. 2, op. 32 nos.1, 3; Etude-Tableaux op. 33 nos. 4, 6 and op. 39 no. 9. His contemporaries noticed that in the "Easter Festival" from his First Suite for two pianos they could recognize the pealing of the bells of the Sretensky monastery in Moscow, where Rachmaninov often went to hear a master bell-ringer. As the famous Russian critic Vladimir Stasov said of Rachmaninov's Preludes op. 23, "There is something deeply rooted and very joyful in them [...] Rachmaninov is ringing from a new bell tower, and his bells are new."[16]

The influence of sacred music on Rachmaninov goes well beyond Russian medieval melodies and the sound of bells. Other important structural features of Russian liturgical music also found their way into his works. The Russian music theorist, Andrey Myasoyedov, asserts that the most common diatonic structure in older liturgical chants is the one that consists of four tones built on the perfect-fifth interrelationship. Consider, for instance, the melodic pattern consisting of four pitches, C-D-A-G, whose arrangement by perfect fifths would be C-G-D-A. Each note of this melodic pattern can and does carry the function of a temporary "tonic" within a melody. In multi-voiced liturgical arrangements of the chants, each of these four notes is harmonized by a diatonic triad: C major, D minor, A minor, and G major. Each of these four triads intermittently serves as a temporary "tonic." Myasoyedov calls this junction of four equal triads *"pragarmoniya"* (protoharmony). The protoharmony has no single unifying center, since each member of the protoharmony tends to be equal and independent. Even when other diatonic triads are added to the protoharmony, the four main "tonic" triads still retain their stable functions (i, VII, III, iv in the conditional minor, I, ii, vi, V in the conditional major).[17]

[16]Translated from Briantseva, *S. V. Rachmaninov*, p. 341.

[17]Andrey Nikolaevich Myasoyedov, *O garmonii russkoy muzyki* (Moscow: Prest, 1998), pp. 18-21.

Transpositions of the protoharmony a perfect fourth up or down, typical for Russian liturgical music, create a fuller diatonic system based on the protoharmony. This phenomenon explains the so-called "*ladovaya pere-mennost*" (modal mutability) in Russian music, when harmony shifts between at least two equal tonics (e.g., I, ii in the major and i, VII in the minor).[18] Consequently, in a typical modulatory process in multi-voiced church music, a new tonic initially appears as a triad of the first key and only then gradually acquires its secondary chords. This course of harmonic events is in contrast to the Western modulatory procedure in which secondary chords precede the new tonic. Myasoyedov analyzes several of Rachmaninov's works, demonstrating the composer's application of the protoharmony in such compositions as Prelude op. 23 no. 5, the introduction to the second movement of the Second Piano Concerto, and elsewhere.

The modal mutability based on the protoharmony voids the functional organization of harmony common in the West, where the dominant prevails. The chords of the subdominant group (after Hugo Riemann, Russian music theory considers every unstable chord with no leading tone, for instance, VI, iv, and ii° in the minor key, to be a member of the subdominant function) become far more frequent and consequential in Russian music than the dominant chords (that is to say, the chords that include the leading tone, e.g., III⁺, V, and vii° in the minor key), especially in the natural minor. Under these conditions, the progressions D–S are no longer limited to deceptive cadences of the nature V—VI/vi, but instead commonly occur in various harmonic contexts. The prevailing plagality, deriving from the ancient protoharmony, is highly characteristic of the Russian national style. In Rachmaninov, plagality becomes quintessential. He even manages to "plagalize" the leading-tone seventh chord by putting it on the subdominant base and resolving it directly into the tonic triad (e.g., G–B♭–C♯–E or F in D minor).[19]

Unlike Rachmaninov, Scriabin was completely uninterested in the old liturgical chants; in fact, he was not a very observant Orthodox Christian. And also unlike Rachmaninov and most of their contemporaries, Scriabin was fairly indifferent to Russian folk music, a fact that has prompted "a musicological commonplace to portray Scriabin, gratuitously, as a freak cosmopolite

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[18]Myasoyedov, *O garmonii russkoy muzyki*, pp. 33-34, 49.

[19]The chord G–B♭–C♯–F in D minor is called in Russia the "Rachmaninov chord" (see Victor Berkov, "*Rachmaninovskaya garmoniya*" in V. Berkov, *Izbrannye stat'i i issledovaniya*. Moscow: Sovetsky Kompositor, 1977, pp. 345-353).

in the ghetto."[20] In this respect, Western assessment of Scriabin as a not quite Russian composer is similar to the popular attitude toward the "westernized" Tchaikovsky. Tchaikovsky habitually incorporated into his music urban Russian folklore and the *bytovoy romans*. But his Russian critics in the past regarded these sources as "corrupted" since both genres were affected by non-Russian influences. Meanwhile, many Western observers have completely overlooked the Russian roots of Tchaikovsky's music because they were not sufficiently familiar with Russian urban folk and art songs.

The music of Scriabin is usually considered even less Russian than that of Tchaikovsky because the latter, at least occasionally, borrowed some peasant tunes; Scriabin never deigned to do so. Nevertheless, Scriabin's earlier works amply display the typical Russian plagality and a strong affinity with the urban romance. His later compositions lose their connection with Russian romance-like vocalism, a fact that has provided additional ammunition to those who have argued for Scriabin's lack of Russian character. Yet the opposite is true: Scriabin's later music in its spiritual and musical makeup is a purely Russian phenomenon—no less, perhaps even more so, than his early compositions before op. 30.

Although Scriabin was disinterested in the Orthodox Church, he was deeply engrossed in the mystic questions of the human and the divine, matter and spirit, chaos and creation, death and eternity. In the early 1900s, just when his musical style changed radically, these thoughts became particularly acute. That was when, in his notebooks from 1904, he announced the following:

> Everything is nothing more than subjective occurrence [...] a result of our activity, our one and therefore free and absolute activity. Therefore the world is the result of my activity, my creation, my free will. [...] What then is all our life? It is only what I experience, only what I wish for and strive for. It is play, my free play. [...] If the world is my creation, then the question of *knowing* the world resolves itself into the question of knowing the nature of free creativity. [...] I am the author of all experiences. I am the creator of the world. [...] I am God!

From this solipsist conviction springs Scriabin's desire to save the world from materialism and all the ills connected with it, and the conviction that he would be able to do so through his art. When in 1905 Scriabin first read

[20]Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, p. 107.

Helena Blavatsky, the theosophical doctrine of the world's transformation immediately resonated with him. Theosophy describes the evolution of the universe that takes place in cycles of successive human races. The problem for Scriabin was that, according to theosophy, ours was the fifth race, and it would be followed by two more races, the sixth and the seventh. Scriabin, who assigned himself the role of the instigator of the final transfiguration, could not wait for thousands of centuries until the last human race would be at last transformed and become one with the universe. He developed a theory that he could drastically compress the evolution through contraction of time itself. Here is what Scriabin, according to Boris de Schloezer, proposed:

> The evolutionary process distends time, whereas involution pulls time together, folds it, and causes it to vanish completely at the moment of ecstasy. It is, therefore, possible to live a million years in one second; whole periods of history can occur instantaneously, like a flash of lightning, setting off a cosmic whirlwind in a wild dance.[21]

Scriabin's desire to compress time is quite noticeable in all his later works. Regarding his Prelude op. 74 no. 2 he commented to Leonid Sabaneev, "It seems as if this Prelude lasts for several centuries, as if it sounds eternally, for millions of years."[22] Once the problem of the extended order of events as postulated by theosophy was resolved, Scriabin proceeded with his grandiose plan of transforming the universe. Lead by the mystic power of his art, humanity would pass through the stages of the sixth and the seventh races in the shortest possible time and be reincarnated successfully. Scriabin assumed that his messianic activity would cause the end of humankind and of the world, and then would instantaneously bring about the birth of a new world and new superhuman beings. (Believing in metempsychosis, he was convinced that the Messiah was reincarnated in his body and that his birth on Christmas day was by no means coincidental.) In the process of this transformation, humans and nature would disappear in the final all-engulfing fire, the polarity of the male and the female would vanish, the cosmos would be hurled into the sunlit abyss of ecstasy. At that instant the universal consciousness would burst into comprehension of the Unique, when spirit and matter becomes one

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[21]Boris de Schloezer, *Scriabin: Artist and Mystic*, trans. Nicolas Slonimsky (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 216.

[22]Translated from Leonid Sabaneev, *Vospominaniia o Scriabine*, first published in 1925 (Moscow: Klassika-XXI, 2000), p. 315. This prelude actually spans only 17 measures.

and the same. This would complete the final transfiguration of the world.[23] The doctrine seemed rather hyperbolic to many of his contemporaries, but that did not bother Scriabin; after all, art for him was "an all-burning madness and ecstasy."[24]

The work of art intended to cause the collapse and transfiguration of the universe was to be the *Mysterium,* a composition that would be both artistic and religious. It was supposed to take place in the Himalayas, in a specially constructed temple that, according to Scriabin,

> [...] would have columns of incense, lighted by the colorful lights of the music, like huge fluid pillars of fire. The entire temple would be made out of those columns, it would be a fluid, changeable building, flowing like the music itself. There would be everything: a light symphony, a fluid architecture—not harshly material, but trans-parent—and a symphony of aromas, because those pillars would consist not only of lights, but also aromas [...]. And this would be joined by the colors of dawns and sunsets [...].[25]

Scriabin had to create for his new art a musical language that was not to be built on triads. To him, all preceding music, including his earlier works, was "classical" because it was based on triads. "Classical" music, in his view, was a synonym for realism and materialism. As Scriabin explained it in one of his conversations with Sabaneev, "A triad is the most material sound, while these harmonies (and he played some of his new sonorities) have a certain astral meaning, they produce an aura, which is the next, highest stratum."[26] The spring board for his new language turned out to be the 19th-century Russian harmonic idiom used for portraying the supernatural: the *gamma Chernomora* and the *gamma Rimskogo-Korsakova* (the whole-tone and the octatonic scales). Scriabin was not particularly interested in the old pagan spirits depicted by Rimsky-Korsakov, Musorgsky, and others, but he did believe in the existence of non-human spiritual beings, both on the superior and inferior planes. He revealed that one of the episodes of the Seventh Sonata represented a "flying and fluttering spirit," and that the subject of his pieces

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[23]Schloezer, *Scriabin: Artist and Mystic,* pp. 266-270.

[24]Sabaneev, *Vospominaniia o Scriabine,* p. 118.

[25]Translated from Sabaneev, *Vospominaniia o Scriabine,* p. 174.

[26]Translated from Sabaneev, *Vospominaniia o Scriabine,* p. 118.

Enigme and *Etrangeté* was a winged female spirit: prickly, wriggling, evasive, and very coquettish.[27]

Out of the two "supernatural" Russian modes Scriabin's unique harmonic language was born. An example of this new language is the six-note sonority that opens Scriabin's *Prometheus*. In its most basic form, this chord can be notated as C–F♯–B♭–E–A–D. When the astounded Rachmaninov asked Scriabin during a rehearsal of the *Prometheus*, "What are you doing this with?" Scriabin replied, "With the chord of the Pleroma."

The concept of the Pleroma, the primordial divine Wholeness, goes back to one of the ancient documents of Eastern Christian Gnosticism, about which the young Scriabin learned from his friend, the prominent Russian philosopher, Prince Sergey Trubetskoy. The Gnostics believed that Salvation cannot be brought to Earth through Christ's Revelation, but only through Knowledge conquered by humans. The Pleroma is a mysterious realm harboring the source of existence, including the thirty eternal "aeons," of which the first and the highest is Father, and the last and the youngest is Sophia, Divine Wisdom. The thoughts of Sophia become individualized, develop, and manifest themselves in images accessible to humans, and then return back to the Pleroma. Sophia's son, Yaldabaof, using the power he inherited from his mother, created the world of evil. When Sophia finally returns to the Pleroma, the entire world will end, for an all-burning fire will come forth from the secret depths of Cosmos.[28] According to Sabaneev, Scriabin had a precise tonal plan in the *Prometheus*, by which he moved from the "spiritual" keys (which corresponded to the primordial, spiritual, undivided existence, the state of the pre-creative indivisibility) toward the "materialistic" keys, and then back to the "spiritual" ones. Scriabin began with F♯ major that he perceived as blue—the color of reason, the color of complete spirituality. Then, in the development, the music moved toward the

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[27]Sabaneev, *Vospominaniia o Scriabine*, pp. 157-164.

[28]See Igor Belza, "*Filosofskie istoki obraznogo stroya 'Prometeya,'* " paper read at the musicological conference dedicated to the 120th anniversary of Scriabin's birthday, *Razlich- nye aspekty tvorchestva A. N. Skryabina*, Moscow, January 1992. Some of the information stems from the notes I took during Dr. Belza's presentation; some of it can also be found in the abstracts of the conference papers published by the Scriabin Museum (pp. 17-21) and in Belza's article "*Filosofskie istoki obraznogo stroya 'Prometeya'*," in *Gosudarstvenny memorial'ny muzey A. N. Skryabina: Uchyonye zapiski*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Kompozitor, 1993), pp. 71-72.

most materialistic color: red (F major). Ultimately, the evolution resumed, and the tonal plan came back to the "spiritual" keys, ending in F♯ major.[29]

Practically all of Scriabin's late compositions have an extra-musical meaning that is spiritual—in his sense, religious—and aimed at the demate-rialization and transfiguration of the world. For example, the composer nicknamed his Seventh Sonata a "White Mass." Early sketches of this Sonata, which Richard Taruskin considers "one of Scriabin's most pervasively octa-tonic compositions,"[30] bore some resemblance to Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sadko*. When the composer was told about the similarity, he quickly changed the musical text, but the deeper relationship with the octatonic "supernatural" harmony remained. The Seventh Sonata, according to Scriabin, began with "sacred" harmonies followed by a "pure mysticism" of the second theme (*avec une céleste volupté*) that was gradually enveloped by "mystic mists" (*Poco meno vivo*). The first theme returned in the recapitulation (Tempo I) as an "archangel's trumpet." As Scriabin explained it, "These are sacred calls, exclamations of a consecrational incantation."[31]

The composer did not subtitle the Ninth Sonata, but when someone from his circle named it a "Black Mass," Scriabin not only did not object to the description but began using the term himself. Discussing the main themes of the Ninth Sonata with Sabaneev, Scriabin said that the recitative-like first theme "is almost not music, not a melody, but speech, an incantation in tones. [...] One cannot simply perform this, one has to conjure while playing." The second theme (*avec une langueur naissante*) is, in his words, "a slumbering holy entity, and all around it are evil spells."[32]

When one looks at Scriabin's conviction that the world needs to be destroyed and then resurrected through art—and more specifically, his art—one discovers that the core of his doctrine is essentially none other than the Eastern mystic dichotomy of death and transcendence. However, the ascetic mortification of the flesh repulsed Scriabin; he disliked the *stolpniks* and other Orthodox ascetics. Instead, Scriabin found his solution, probably even without quite realizing it, in the pagan Slavonic ceremonies of ritual dancing and *krasnaya* or glorious, literally "red," death. Having composed numerous waltzes and mazurkas during his earlier years, Scriabin eventually turned his

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[29]Sabaneev, *Vospominaniia o Scriabine,* p. 123.

[30]Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically,* p. 345.

[31]Sabaneev, *Vospominaniia o Scriabine,* pp. 157-160.

[32]Sabaneev, *Vospominaniia o Scriabine,* p. 162.

dance pieces into mysterious, if erotic, rituals in *Tanets tomleniya* (*Dance of Languor*), op. 51; *Tanets laski* (Dance of Caress); and the Two Dances op. 73, *Girlandy* (Garlands) and *Tyomnoye plamya* (Dark Flame). In the *Mysterium*, Scriabin had planned to reserve a particularly important role for dance, to be executed by all the participants. In the coda of his Sixth Piano Sonata, Scriabin writes in the score: "*l'épouvante surgit, elle se mêle à la dance délirante*" (horror surges, mingling with delirious dance). The coda of his Seventh Sonata, as he excitedly confides to Sabaneev, is "the last dance! [...] Everything must end, expire in dancing!"[33] The Tenth Sonata also arrives at a concluding dance in which, according to Scriabin, music almost completely evaporates and only a dematerialized rhythm remains.[34] And he describes the last pages of the *Prometheus* as a dance in the midst of flames, before the last all-engulfing fire that breaks out from under the ground.[35]

This role of fire is not incidental. Scriabin, who titled several of his later works using the image—see the *Poem of Fire* (*Prometheus,* op. 60), *K plameni* (To the Flame, op. 72), and *Tyomnoe plamya* (Dark Flame, op. 73)—considered fire to be the agent of the destruction of the world before the final transfiguration. His notion, however, was not new in Russia, where "Red Death" goes back to ancient times. The ritual of "dispatching" to the other world, common among the ancient Slavs, included the smothering with a red pillow. The symbolism of the color red, associated with fire and the deified Cosmos, indicated the direction of dispatching someone to cosmic ancestors.[36] These ancient beliefs of the cleansing force of fire, combined with the later apocalyptic beliefs about the end of the world, when a river of fire would flow and nothing would escape its flames, survived in Russia for centuries. In the 17th century, many Russian Christians did not accept the liturgical reforms introduced by Patriarch Nikon. That led to a bitter schism between the official church and the secular authorities on the one side and the followers of the old rites, or the Old Believers, on the other. The Old Believers' monasteries and dwellings were surrounded by government forces who demanded acceptance of the new rituals. However, rather then surrender and concede, the Old Believers chose the Red Death, or collective self-immolation. (These gory events were the subject of Musorgsky's opera *Khovanshchina*).

[33]Translated from Sabaneev, *Vospominaniia o Scriabine,* p. 160.

[34]Translated from Sabaneev, *Vospominaniia o Scriabine,* p. 263,

[35]Translated from Sabaneev, *Vospominaniia o Scriabine,* p. 188.

[36]Veletskaia, "Forms of Transformation of Pagan Symbolism ... ," p. 51.

After his depiction of universal death through all-cleansing fire, Scriabin proceeds to the ultimate rapture, when the word "ecstasy" becomes almost too weak to describe the joy of transfiguration. The composer proclaims that the minor mode must disappear from music, because art has to be a jubilation, and a jubilation cannot be cast in the minor mode. While writing his Tenth Sonata, he raves about his vision of the emerging piece: "There must be such a joy here, joy over the brink, to an absolute frenzy!"[37]

Where does Scriabin discover his joyous tones? The answer is perhaps not altogether surprising: in the most powerful, most exorbitantly jubilant, most Russian sound—bells. From the exhilarated reverberations in the last eight bars of his early Prelude op. 11 no. 1 to those resounding in the unfinished *Mysterium*, bell pealing constituted an integral part of Scriabin's music. Bell-like sonorities saturate many of his compositions: the Preludes op. 37 no. 2, op. 48 nos. 1 and 4, op. 74 no. 5; the *Promethius*; the Etudes op. 42 no. 5 and op. 65 no. 3; the last Sonatas; and the Poem *Vers la flamme*, op. 72. The composer described certain harmonies in the Seventh Sonata as bells that were hung at the sky and called humankind to the "mysterial" action.[38] Shortly before his death, Scriabin frequently played to his friends passages from the *Mysterium* that were to suggest bell pealing (they remained unwritten), and was trying to figure out a way to hang the bells from the sky during the eventual performance of the composition.

Despite appearances to the contrary, both Scriabin's eschatological philosophy and musical style were firmly rooted in Russian spiritual, religious, and musical traditions: the mystic dichotomy conjoining a destruction of the universe through a cosmic fire and the ensuing boundless ecstasy of eternal life, all induced by his art; a special musical language that suggests the mystical "superhuman" and is based on the "fantastic" idiom of Russian 19th-century composers; and an overwhelming exaltation of bells announcing and glorifying the utmost joy of the final transfiguration.

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[37]Sabaneev, *Vospominaniia o Scriabine*, pp. 263-264.

[38]Sabaneev, *Vospominaniia o Scriabine*, p. 157.

Part II

Lifting the Secular Veil

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A Sermon for Fishes in a Secular Age:
On the Scherzo Movement of Mahler's
Second Symphony

Magnar Breivik

Gustav Mahler composed his Second Symphony in C minor during the years 1887-1894. In an intermediate phase of this extensive creative process Mahler regarded the first movement as a self-sufficient symphonic poem, named "Todtenfeier"—funeral.

In his Mahler book of 1921, Paul Bekker describes Mahler's symphonies as decidedly *finale* symphonies carrying through a principle aspired to, yet never fulfilled, by Bruckner. "All of Mahler's symphonies are finale symphonies," he says, and continues:

> The finale, may it be short or long, may it be, as in the First, a broadly sweeping allegro, or, as in the Second, a wildly dramatic fantasy picture remotely reminiscent of Berlioz, or, as in the Third, a tranquil adagio [...] Each of these finales, up to and including the Ninth, carries within itself the key to the work, in constitutes the center to which the threads of all preceding movements lead and from which they extricate themselves.[1]

The dramatic finale of Second Symphony is one of Mahler's grandest artistic achievements. The symphony's famous subtitle, *Resurrection*, derives from the included chorale on Friedrich Klopstock's poem, "Auferstehung," which Mahler complemented with six further stanzas of his own.

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[1] "Das Finale, mag es kurz, mag es lang sein, mag es wie in der Ersten ein weitgesponnenes Allegro, oder wie in der Zweiten ein von Ferne an Berlioz gemahnendes wild bewegtes Fantasiebild sein, or wie in der Dritten, ein ruhevolles Adagio [...] alle diese Finale bis hinauf zur Neunten bergen in sich den Schlüssel des Werkes, sind das Zentrum, zu dem die Fäden sämtlicher vorangehender Sätze hinleiten und von dem aus sie sich entwirren." Paul Bekker, *Gustav Mahler's Sinfonien* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1969), p. 20.

The aim of this essay is not to investigate the work's monumental conclusion, but rather to present a closer look at one of the paths that leads to and extricates itself from it: the third movement, often referred to as the *scherzo*.[2]

To provide a context, here is a brief introduction to the work as a whole. Mahler's view that a symphony ought to embrace *everything*, just like the world itself, is well known.[3] Initially, what he wished to oppose by this statement was the absolutist demand for a restraining logic of profound structural coherence. With regard to his œuvre as a whole, however, this recognition may also be seen as a characterization of what he wanted to obtain through his own music: universal, all-encompassing, spiritual works of art. Seen in this broader perspective, Mahler's Second Symphony must be considered one of the most striking outputs of this deep-felt and ambitious aspiration. The work involves the gigantic apparatus of a large orchestra with, among others, "largest possible contingents of all strings" and seven percussion players. A massive row of horns and trumpets, as well as timpani, cymbals, triangles, and bass drums, are required both on- and offstage. The extensive vocal parts are performed by soprano solo, alto solo, and mixed chorus. The brilliant utilization of the instruments is in itself an illuminating example of Mahler's vast contribution to the phenomenon of orchestral sound. The epistemological foundation of this expansive music spans from the earthly funeral to heavenly Resurrection. The work is thus conceived as a giant depiction of the dualism of human death and eternal life. "I will die in order to live"[4] which, in Mahler's own supplement to Klopstock's text, appears towards the end of the finale, may be seen as a key statement to the work as a whole.

Mahler, who was Jewish by birth, converted to Catholicism in 1897. His considerations of Christian faith, however, began long before that date. Constantin Floros[5] points to the subtle combination of the composer's profound belief in continuous rebirth and the Christian doctrine of

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[2]The title *scherzo* does not appear in the score of the third movement, but is instead established indirectly in the finale, through the indication *Im Tempo des Scherzo's*. However, usually the third movement is characterized as a scherzo, as it also was by Mahler himself.

[3]Mahler's "Nein, die Symphonie muß sein wie die Welt. Sie muß alles umfassen" is said to have come up in a discussion with his distinguished Finnish colleague, Jean Sibelius. See Karl-Josef Müller, *Mahler: Leben, Werke, Dokumente* (Mainz: Piper/Schott, 1988), p. 352.

[4]"Sterben werd' ich, um zu leben."

[5]Constantin Floros, "Weltanschauung und Symphonik bei Mahler," Hermann Danuser, ed., *Gustav Mahler* (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992), p. 355.

Resurrection. This connection becomes especially apparent in his Second Symphony.

The composition consists of five movements. In a set of program notes written in 1901, Mahler describes the first movement as the sad and thought-provoking funeral of a highly valued person:

> *Movement I*: We are standing at a loved one's coffin. One more time, one last time the dear one's life, struggles, sufferings, and aspirations pass before our inner eye. In this grave and most profoundly dismaying moment, when we strip all the confusions and distractions of everyday life like a blanket, our hearts are seized by a terrifyingly stern voice, invariably ignored in the course of the numbing bustle of our days: What now? What is this life, and this death? Is there for us any continuation? Is all this just an chaotic dream, or do this life and death have meaning? This is a question we need to answer if we are to go on living.[6]

Between the first movement and the fifth there are three intermediate pieces. According to Mahler's program, these pertain to different moments of the deceased protagonist's earthly life. The second movement offers a wistful glance back to his youth:

> *Movement II*: A blissful movement from the life of this dear deceased, and a sorrowful memory of his youth and his lost innocence.[7]

About the third movement, which will be the main focus of the present discussion, Mahler tells us that the cherished departed has been seized by severe doubt:

[6] "*1. Satz.* Wir stehen am Sarge eines geliebten Menschen. Sein Leben, Kämpfen, Leiden und Wollen zieht noch eimal, zum letzten Male an unserem geistigen Auge vorüber. – Und nun in diesem ernsten und im Tiefsten erschütternden Augenblicke, wo wir alles Verwirrende und Herabziehende des Alltags wie eine Decke abstreifen [,] greift eine furchtbar ernste Stimme an unser Herz, die wir im betäubenden Treiben des Tages stets überhören: Was nun? Was ist dieses Leben – und dieser Tod? Giebt es für uns eine Fortdauer? Ist dies Alles nur ein wüster Traum, oder hat dieses Leben und dieser Tod einen Sinn? – Und diese Frage müssen wir beantworten, wenn wir weiter leben sollen." This and the following programmatic remarks from Mahler's pen are quoted from Rudolf Stephan, *Meisterwerke der Musik: Mahler, II. Symphonie c-moll* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1979), pp. 80-81.

[7] "*2. Satz – Andante:* Ein seliger Augenblick aus dem Leben dieses theueren Todten, und eine wehmütige Erinnerung an seine Jugend und verlorene Unschuld."

> *Movement III—Scherzo*: The spirit of disbelief, of denial has
> conquered him, he looks into the jumble of appearances and, along
> with his childlike purity, loses the fast hold which love alone gives,
> he doubts himself and God. World and life strike him as a chaotic
> phantom; revulsion of all being and becoming seizes him with an
> iron fist and drives him until he screams in despair.[8]

For the brief fourth movement Mahler uses one of his own songs,
"Urlicht." At this point the pure voice of faith has displaced the spirit of
disbelief:

> *Movement IV, Primeval Light (Alto solo)*: The touching voice of
> naive faith rings in our ears. "I am of God and will return to God!
> The dear God will give me a little light, which will light my steps all
> the way to the blissful, eternal life!" [9]

After this bridge between the scherzo and the expansive *Resurrection*
finale, the symphony's gigantic conclusion opens up to the Day of all Days:

> *Movement V:* Once again we face all the terrifying questions and the
> mood that reigned at the conclusion of the first movement. The voice
> of the Herald resounds: The end of all that lives has come, the Last
> Judgment is being announced, and the ultimate horror of the Day of
> Days has erupted. The earth quakes, the graves spring open, the
> dead rise and advance in endless procession. The big and the small
> of this earth, the kings and the beggars, the righteous and the
> godless: they all strive to enter. Their cry for mercy and grace is
> shrill in our ears. The screaming becomes increasingly dreadful,
> while our senses abandon us and consciousness leaves us in the
> approach towards the Eternal Judgement. The "Great Appeal"
> sounds, the trumpets of the Apocalypse call: amidst the dread-filled
> silence we believe to perceive a nightingale, far far away, like a last
> shivering echo of earthly life! A chorus of saints and heavenly
> beings intones softly: "Resurrect, yes, you will resurrect." Then

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[8]"*3. Satz – Scherzo:* Der Geist des Unglaubens, der Verneinung hat sich seiner bemächtigt,
er blickt in das Gewühl der Erscheinungen und verliert mit dem reinen Kindersinn den
festen Halt, den allein die Liebe giebt, er zweifelt an sich und Gott. Die Welt und das Leben
wird ihm zum wirren Spuk; der Ekel vor allem Sein und Werden packt ihn mit eiserner
Faust und jagt ihn bis zum Aufschrei der Verzweiflung."

[9]"*4. Satz Urlicht* (Alt-Solo). Die rührende Stimme des naiven Glaubens tönt an unser Ohr.
'Ich bin von Gott, und ich will wieder zu Gott! Der liebe Gott wird mir ein Lichtchen geben,
wird leuchten mir bis in das ewig' selig' Leben[']"

emerges the glory of God! A wonderful, mild light shines through us and into our hearts. All is silent and bliss ful! And behold: There is no judgement. There is no sinner, no just, no big or little; there is no punishment and no reward! An almighty feeling of love shines through us with blessed certainty and being.[10]

Mahler's general attitude towards literary programs was more than ambiguous. The program notes to his Second Symphony were written some seven years after the work had been concluded. Ludwig Scheidermair recalls Mahler's abrupt rejection of literary programs just a year before that, in October 1900, and even at a function following a performance of the very same work:

Mahler's eyes shone more than usual; frowning and very agitated, he rose from the table and shouted emotionally: "Away with the programs, which engender wrong impressions. Let the audience have their own thoughts about the work being performed [...] If a composer has evoked in the listeners the sensations that once flooded through him, then he has reached his goal. Then the musical language has come close to words, while revealing endlessly more than they are able to express. [...] Mahler seized his glass and emptied it with a "Death to all programs!"[11]

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[10]"*5. Satz.* Wir stehen wieder vor allen furchtbaren Fragen, – und der Stimmung am Ende des 1. Satzes.– Es ertönt die Stimme des Rufers: Das Ende alles Lebendigen ist gekommen, das jüngste Gericht kündigt sich an, und der ganze Schrecken des Tages aller Tage ist hereingebrochen. – Die Erde bebt, die Gräber springen auf, die Toten erheben sich und schreiten in endlosem Zug daher. Die Großen und die Kleinen dieser Erde, die Könige und die Bettler, die Gerechten und die Gottlosen – Alle wollen dahin; der Ruf nach Erbarmen und Gnade tönt schrecklich an unser Ohr. – Immer furchtbarer schreit es daher – alle Sinne vergehen uns, alles Bewußtsein schwindet uns beim Herannahen des ewigen Gerichtes. Der '*Große A[p]pell*' ertönt, die Trompeten der Apokalypse rufen: mitten in der grauenvollen Stille glauben wir eine ferne, ferne Nachtigall zu vernehmen, wie einen letzten zitternden Nachhall des Erdenlebens! Leise erklingt ein Chor der Heiligen und Himmlischen: 'Auferstehen, ja auferstehn wird du.' Da erscheint die Herrlichkeit Gottes! Ein wundervolles, mildes Licht durchdringt uns bis an das Herz – alles ist stille und selig! – Und siehe da: Es ist kein Gericht – Es ist kein Sünder, kein Gerechter – kein Großer und kein Kleiner – Es ist nicht Strafe und nacht John! In allmächtiges Liebesgefühl durchleuchtet uns mit seligem Wissen und Sein."

[11]"Mahlers Augen leuchteten mehr denn je, seine Stirne zog sich empor, mit Erregung sprang er vom Tische auf und rief in bewegten Worten: "Fort mit den Programmen, die falsche Vorstellungen erzeugen. Man lasse dem Publikum seine eigenen Gedanken über das aufgeführte Werk [...] Hat in Komponist den Hörern von selbst die Empfindungen aufgedrängt, die ihn durchfluteten, dann ist sein Ziel erreicht. Die Tonsprache ist dann den Worten nahegekommen, hat aber unendlich mehr, als diese auszudrücken vermögen,

Notwithstanding this alleged aversion to programmatic descriptions, it is obvious that Mahler struggled with the question whether or not to present listeners with verbal guidelines to his works. His music was often rooted in an idea or a conception that he wanted to make sure reached through to the listener. It is obvious from Mahler's letters and recollected conversations that he was convinced of being in the position of a messenger of artistic and spiritual truth. Consequently, he urgently wished for his message to be properly received. If that happened, his music had not only come close to words, it had exhaustively transcended them.

The focus on a deeper signification, however, does not mean that Mahler is delimiting his art to utterances of semantic meaning. On the contrary: he is convinced that music abides in the dimmer regions of human emotions and recognition. In a letter to the Berlin critic and composer, Max von Marschalk (1863–1940), he uses exactly this perspective to express his views on music's superiority over words:

> Please allow me to briefly expound my point of view. I know for myself that, as long as I can summarize my experience in words, I surely would not make music about it. My need to express myself musically, symphonically, only begins at the point where *dark* sensations reign, at the gate that leads into the "other world"; the world in which things are no longer differentiated by time and space.[12]

Mahler's notions on the wellspring of genuine musical expression are highly Romantic. His views are also indicative of philosophies of art connected with the *Sezession*, an *Art Nouveau* movement whose adherents strove to create organic unity on various levels of human experience. Without doubt, Mahler regards music as an art far surpassing that of the written word. Hence, in his ambiguous attitude towards musical message and verbal

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kundgegeben [...] Und Mahler ergriff sein Glas und leerte es mit einem 'Pereat den Programmen'." Ludwig Schiedermair, *Gustav Mahler* (Leipzig, 1900), p. 13, here quoted from Karl-Josef Müller, *Mahler: Leben, Werke, Dokumente*, p. 216.

[12]"Erlauben Sie mir, Ihnen in Kürze meinen Standpunkt darzulegen. – Ich weiß für mich, daß ich, solange ich mein Erlebnis in Worten zusammenfassen kann, gewiß keine Musik hierüber machen würde. Mein Bedürfnis, mich musikalisch – symphonisch auszusprechen, beginnt erst da, wo die *dunkeln* Empfindungen walten, an der Pforte, die in die 'andere Welt' hineinführt; die Welt, in der die Dinge nacht mehr durch Zeit und Ort auseinander-fallen." Letter of 26 March 1896, quoted from Rudolf Stephan, *Meisterwerke der Musik: Mahler, II. Symphonie c-moll*, p. 78.

explanation, the important point to bear in mind is that Mahler was no composer of program music in the traditional sense. Mahler's verbal comments must never be taken for programs as such: they are always metaphors referring to something that cannot be expressed in words. His descriptions are in themselves means of voicing the ineffable, albeit in a more imperfect and incomplete way than is achieved in his music. This means that the "funeral of a beloved person" of Mahler's Second Symphony must not be taken literally, but rather as a guideline towards deeper content. In another letter to Marschalk, Mahler presents a concrete, pictorial association to the third movement of his preceding, first symphony.[13] He then hastens to point to the irrelevance of making such a connection at all.

> At this point it is, however, irrelevant what is being depicted; what matters exclusively is the *mood* that is to be given an expression, and from which the fourth movement springs like lightening from a dark cloud.[14]

Mahler's first four symphonies are often referred to as his *Lied* symphonies. They all include substantial material from his songs, beginning with *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (Songs of a Wayfarer) in the First. The *Urlicht* movement of the Second Symphony, conveyed by a soloistic (solitary-sounding) alto voice, is based on one of Mahler's over twenty settings from the popular collection, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Boy's Magic Horn). So is the music of the scherzo movement, a piece built on "Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt" (Anthony of Padua's Sermon to the Fishes). When embarking on the scherzo, Mahler had just composed the song-and-piano version of this poem; the orchestral version of the song, which is the one that is more commonly known today, was written shortly afterwards. *Wunderhorn* settings are also included in Mahler's third and fourth symphonies.

Des Knaben Wunderhorn appeared in the course of the years 1805-1808, edited by the poet Clemens Brentano (1778–1842) and the antiquarian Achim von Arnim (1781-1831). The work was subtitled *Alte deutsche Lieder* (Old German Songs); its editors would later be regarded as leaders of the Romantic

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[13]This is a children's picture that was well known at the time, entitled *Des Jägers Leichen-begängnis* (The hunter's funeral).

[14]"An dieser Stelle ist es aber irrelevant, was dargestellt wird – es kommt nur auf die *Stimmung* an, welche zum Ausdruck gebracht werden soll, und aus der dann jäh, wie in Blitz aus der dunklen Wolke, der vierte Satz springt." Letter of 20 March 1896, reprinted in Carl Dahlhaus and Michael Zimmermann, eds., *Musik zur Sprache gebracht,* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag and Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1984), p. 333.

movement for having revived enthusiasm for the so-called *Volkslied.* Some of the songs were considered genuine folk material dating from the Middle Ages. However, many of the poems were, in fact, either anonymously composed by 17th-century poets or rewritten by Brentano and Arnim themselves.

In his review of 1806, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, to whom the collection was dedicated, also recognized its inherent *musical* potential:

> Yet the best place for this volume would be on the piano of the amateur or master of music, in order either to do the songs contained in it justice with familiar, traditional melodies, or to mold suitable tunes to them, or, so God wished, to summon through them new and important melodies.[15]

Mahler's settings are undoubtedly among the most famous responses to Goethe's suggestions. The early Mahler biographer, Richard Specht, describes the composer's affinity with this precious material:

> In these *Wunderhorn* songs with their placid naïveté and their droll humor, Mahler has revealed his childlike mind to the full. In these images and legends of saints, these precious, hoarse, funny, and dread-filled soldiers' pieces, these fairy tales and lovers' idylls he has expressed his heartfelt connection with animals and flowers, murmuring waters, fleeing clouds, as much as his profound wisdom of the world, captured in the simplest of symbols or in humorous caricatures.[16]

The story of "Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt" is rooted in a legend associated with the life of St. Anthony (1195–1231). In 1212, a Portuguese by the secular name of Ferdinand entered the monastery of Santa Croce in Coimbra, where he is said to have acquired a remarkable amount of

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[15]"Am besten aber läge doch dieser Band auf dem Klavier des Liebhabers oder des Meisters der Tonkunst, um den darin enthaltenen Liedern entweder mit bekannten hergebrachten Melodien ganz ihr Recht widerfahren zu lassen, oder ihnen schickliche Weisen anzu-schmiegen, oder wenn Gott wollte, neue bedeutende Melodien durch sie hervorzulocken." Quoted from Rudolf Stephan, *Meisterwerke der Musik: Mahler, II. Symphonie c-moll,* pp. 55-56.

[16]"In diesen Wunderhornliedern, in ihrer stillen Einfalt und ihrem schnurrigen Humor hat Mahler sein ganzes Kindergemüt offenbart; in diesen Heiligenbildern und Legenden, diesen kostbaren, rauhen, lustigen und schaurigen Soldatenstücken, diesen Märchen und Liebesidyllen hat er seine innige Zusammengehörigkeit mit Tieren und Blumen, murmelndem Wasser, fliehenden Wolken ebenso ausgedrückt, wie seine im einfachsten Symbol oder in humoristischer Karikatur ausgedrückte Weltweisheit." Richard Specht, *Gustav Mahler* (Stuttgart/Berlin: Deustche Verlags-Anstalt, 1925), p. 171.

theological knowledge. Seized by an urge towards martyrdom, he decided to become a Friar Minor in order to preach the Holy Faith to the frightening Saracens. On a journey to Morocco he was taken seriously ill and thereby forced to sail back to Portugal. Due to heavy storms and perilous seas, the ship came out of course and stranded on Sicily. After returning to Portugal, an eventful life would finally lead him to the town of Padua, Italy, where he ended his days in neighboring Camposanpiero.

The *Fischpredigt* story is linked to St. Anthony's remarkable gifts as an orator. The Internet *Catholic Encyclopedia* describes him in the following way:

> He possessed in an eminent degree all the good qualities that characterize an eloquent preacher: a loud and clear voice, a winning countenance, wonderful memory, and profound learning, to which were added from on high the spirit of prophesy and an extraordinary gift of miracles. With the zeal of an apostle he undertook to reform the morality of his time by combating in an especial manner the vices of luxury, avarice and tyranny. The fruit of his sermons was, therefore, as admirable as his eloquence itself. No less fervent was he in the extinction of heresy [...][17]

The sermon to the fishes on the bank of river Brenta, near Padua, is regarded as one of St. Anthony's most notable miracles. As the traditional legend goes, St. Anthony, celebrated for his edifying sermons, one day found his church empty. He then went to the rivers to preach to the fishes instead. The fishes gathered from far and near. Unlike selfish specimens of the human race they did not only congregate: they even organized themselves neatly in rows in order to give each other proper space and ample opportunities for seeing and listening. After the sermon had ended, the story tells us that they all lingered persistently until the saint had consented to give them his blessings.

St. Anthony was a Franciscan. According to that tradition, all God's creatures are dear and precious, and welcomed to remain just how they are. St. Anthony of Padua's preaching to the denizens of the water may thus be seen as a counterpart to St. Francis of Assisi's famous sermon to the birds. The introduction of fishes—of all creatures—may also invite associations with the notion of Christ's disciples as fishers of men. In such a context, St. Anthony would be regarded as counting among the holy apostles who

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[17]See the article found at http://www.newadvent.org/cathen.

receive their rhetorical gifts directly from the Lord.[18] And as Christ, the preacher of preachers, had to descend from Heaven to earth, St. Anthony descends from his holy church to the streaming waters.

The saint proves his extraordinary gifts by summoning the fishes through the spiritual strength of his eloquent tongue. One of the significant traits of the story is that he obviously has the power to reach through even into another element, to creatures without conventional organs of hearing. It certainly cannot be a lack of persuasive abilities that has kept his congregation away. And the unfaithful human fold may well be seized by bitter remorse: the dumb, gray fishes are the ones who in fact receive both the redeeming Word of the Lord and the saint's benevolent benediction.

In the *Wunderhorn* version, however, the legend of this extraordinary sermon presents quite another lesson. It proves to have less to do with kindness and respect for God's creatures of the water. The poem itself, "Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt," originates from Ulrich Megerle (1644–1709), better known by his religious name, Abraham a Santa Clara, and his highly acclaimed *Judas der Erzschelm* (Judas the Arch Knave), first printed in 1686. Abraham was a famous preacher in Vienna. His numerous writings and religious tractates combine juicy humor with profound, ethical sobriety. Through various reflections and edifying digressions, *Judas der Erzschelm* is designed as a many-sided biography on Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Jesus. The book was so popular that a musical work by the German composer, Daniel Speer (1636–1707), appeared already the following year.[19] The verses included in the *Wunderhorn* collection relate the legend of how St. Anthony of Padua one day finds his church stark empty. As we already know, he then goes to the rivers to sermonize to the fishes. The fishes obediently congregate and all seem to be listening piously. But then the story takes an unexpected turn: after the sermon is over, it becomes apparent that those treacherous creatures have not let one single word into their hearts. They completely forget about blessing and disperse without having changed anything at all of their bad habits and doubtful behavior:

[18]"As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.' At once they left their nets and followed him." Matthew 4:18-20.

[19]See Rudolf Stephan, *Meisterwerke der Musik: Mahler, II. Symphonie c-moll*, p. 54.

Antonius zur Predigt	St. Anthony for his Sermon
Die Kirche findt ledig.	finds the church empty.
Er geht zu den Flüssen	He goes to the rivers
und predigt den Fischen;	and preaches to the fishes;
Sie schlagen mit den Schwänzen,	They flick their tails,
Im Sonnenschein glänzen.	which glisten in the sunshine.
Die Karpfen mit Rogen	The carp with roe
Sind [allhier gezogen][20],	have all come here,
Haben d'Mäuler aufrissen,	have opened their mouths wide,
Sich Zuhörens beflissen;	listening eagerly.
Kein Predigt niemalen	No sermon ever
Den Karpfen so g'fallen	pleased the carp so.
Spitzgoschete Hechte,	Sharp-mouthed pike
Die immerzu fechten,	that always fight,
Sind eilend herschwommen,	have come here, swimming hurriedly
Zu hören den Frommen;	to hear this pious one;
[Kein Predigt niemalen	No sermon ever
Den Hechten so g'fallen.][21]	pleased the pike so.
Auch jene Phantasten,	Even those utopians
Die immerzu fasten;	that always fast—
Die Stockfisch ich meine,	the stockfish, I mean—
Zur Predigt erscheinen;	appeared for the sermon;
Kein Predigt niemalen	No sermon ever
Den Stockfisch so g'fallen.	pleased the stockfish so.
Gut Aale und Hausen,	Good eels and sturgens,
Die vornehme schmausen,	that banquet so nobly –
Die selbst sich bequemen,	even they took the trouble
Die Predigt vernehmen:	to hear the sermon:
[Kein Predigt niemalen	No sermon ever
den Aalen so g'fallen.][21]	pleased the eels so.
Auch Krebse, Schildkröten,	Crabs too, and turtles,
Sonst langsame Boten,	usually such slowpokes,
Steigen eilig vom Grund,	rise quickly from the bottom,
Zu hören diesen Mund:	to hear this voice.
Kein Predigt niemalen	No sermon ever
den Krebsen so g'fallen.	pleased the crabs so.

[20]Another version: "all' hierher zogen."

[21]Not set by Mahler.

Fisch große, Fisch kleine,	Big fish, little fish,
Vornehm und gemeine,	noble fish, common fish,
Erheben die Köpfe	all lift their heads
Wie verständge Geschöpfe:	as if they were rational creatures:
Auf Gottes Begehren	At God's behest
Die Predigt anhören.	they listen to the sermon.
Die Predigt geendet,	The sermon having ended,
In jeder sich wendet,	each turns around;
Die Hechte bleiben Diebe,	the pike remain thieves,
Die Aale viel lieben.	the eels, great lovers.
Die Predigt hat g'fallen.	The sermon has pleased them,
Sie bleiben wie alle.	but they remain the same as before.
Die Krebs gehn zurücke,	The crabs still walk backwards,
Die Stockfisch bleiben dicke,	the stockfish stay thickset,
Die Karpfen viel fressen,	the carps still stuff themselves,
die Predigt vergessen.	the sermon is forgotten!
Die Predigt hat g'fallen.	The sermon has pleased them,
Sie bleiben wie alle.	but they remain the same as before.[22]

What is recounted in this version is still a story of the heavenly inspired capacity of eloquent speech. But it is also a depiction of the stubborn strength of worldly disbelief. We are still told that St. Anthony, the brilliant preacher and powerful castigator, has lost his entire congregation: not one single soul is left. And from the waters even the tortoise, the crawfish, and the ever-fasting stockfish—the drystick—show up. We can vividly imagine how they all emerge from the bottom of the rivers, where they most thoroughly belong, and make commendable efforts to lift themselves above their everyday existence and water-bound environment. Having reached thus far, we expect the miracle account to end with the tale how God's silent creatures of the water are genuinely edified by the Sacred Word rejected by man. What we learn, however, is different. The fishes may indeed be uplifted, and they all seem to be enjoying the gathering. Yet despite all outward signs of inborn innocence and temporary sympathy, they prove to be no better than human beings when, in the end, they all dissipate to their respective repositories, remaining as wicked as ever. Everything turns out to be callousness and outward falseness. St. Anthony must have been preaching to deaf ears after

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[22]This rendering of the German original text supplied with an English translation is greatly indebted to *The Song and Lied Texts Page*, http://www.recmusic.org/lieder. Input by Jakob Kellner, translation into English by Emily Ezust.

all. The creatures are so hardened that the spoken message seems to have come across as ultimately voiceless and mute. That the saint has miraculously succeeded in making the fishes listen, but alas, without managing to convince them, may be regarded as a mockery questioning the reality of his persuasive abilities. However, it may also be interpreted as a warning, focusing on the power of the world's disbelief and traitorous behavior. A damaging and far-reaching process of secularization has taken place; defection has proved destructively complete.

In "Des Anthonius von Padua Fischpredigt," fishes and people turn out to be but poor reflections of each other. As if in a mirror we see what has actually taken place in St. Anthony's unfaithful congregation. In addition to the humorous and slightly disrespectful description of the whole event, Mahler seems to be especially attracted by the astonishing conclusion. In a conversation with his friend, Natalie Bauer-Lechner (1858–1921), Mahler spoke about the "bitter-sweet humor" which he felt permeated the poem, and how he imagined the story as a hilarious incident. He saw the water creatures, with their stupid heads stiffly raised above the liquid surface, all looking at the preaching saint without becoming any wiser at all:

> Look at this shimmering swarm: the eels and the carps and the sharp-mouthed pike, whose stupid faces, looking up at Anthony from their stiff, unmoveable necks raised above water, I truly believed to see in my music, so that I had to laugh loudly. And the assembly then, once the sermon is over, swims and disperses in all directions [...] and has not become even a tiny bit wiser, even though the saint has struck up the band! However, the implied satire on humankind will be understood by but a few.[23]

In Mahler's opinion, the fishes of the *Wunderhorn* poem reflect not only the preacher's specific congregation, but humankind as a whole. In his Second Symphony he takes us even further into this recognition. Mahler transfers an instrumental version of the song into his new symphonic work, and by doing so he connects the ancient *Volkslied* legend, even more strongly than in the initial *Wunderhorn* setting to the life-and-death perspective and his own secularized *fin-de-siècle*. The reason is that, despite its timeless actuality, the *song* version may also be regarded as a noteworthy revival of traditional, and even historical, material, as a signal from the past. In the symphony, a new,

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[23]Translated from Natalie Bauer-Lechner's *Erinnerungen an Gustav Mahler*, first published in 1923 by E.P. Tal & Co. Verlag, Leipzig/Vienna/Zurich. In this essay, her recollections are quoted from Rudolf Stephan, *Meisterwerke der Musik: Mahler, II. Symphonie c-moll*, p. 6.

contemporary creation, the song is *not* a song any longer. It has been trans-formed to another level, where the music sounds while the story has become mute. The message has been transfigured in such a way that, like the fishes of St. Anthony, we do not hear a word.

Mahler's initial music for the *Fischpredigt* song is set in three-eight-time and typified by the indication *Behäbig, mit Humor* (stolid, good-humoredly). The setting thus comes with some basic, conventional qualifications that provide suitable material for a symphonic scherzo. However, the reason why Mahler decided to transfer an instrumental version of the former song into his new work may lie rather in the combination of purely musical characteristics and the *Fischpredigt*'s ingenious parable of human nature.

While the text is absent in the symphonic movement, the music is substantially expanded. The 197 measures of the original song have been extended to 581 measures in the symphonic version. In keeping with the conventions of scherzo form, this expansion is very much due to the addition of what can be regarded as thematic *trio* material. The tempo, too, is increased when compared to that of the song. In what follows I shall, however, leave most of the formal and technical considerations aside and turn instead to a hermeneutic approach.

In 1887, at the time when Mahler began creating this work, he was also completing his First Symphony. He regarded the Second Symphony as a direct continuation, and not only with regard to the time of its composition. In another letter to Max Marschalk, Mahler describes the protagonist buried in the Second as the hero featured in the preceding D-major *Titan Symphony*:

> I have called the first movement "funeral" and, if you would want to know, it is the hero from my D-major symphony whom I carry to the grave here, and whose life I capture, from a higher vantage point, in a clean mirror.[24]

As already suggested, it is important to keep in mind that we are not dealing with a literary program, but rather with an indicator of a basic mood or a deeper level of recognition. When Carl Dahlhaus sees this "hero" as "rather the aesthetic of the music, a figure belonging to the aesthetic substance

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[24]"Ich habe den ersten Satz 'Totenfeier' genannt, und wenn Sie es wissen wollen, so ist es der Held meiner D-dur-Symphonie, den ich da zu Grabe trage, und dessen Leben ich, von einer höheren Warte aus, in einem reinen Spiegel auffange." Letter of 26 March 1896, quoted from Rudolf Stephan, *Meisterwerke der Musik: Mahler, II. Symphonie c-moll*, p. 79.

of the work itself,"[25] he is in line with Richard Specht's comment:

> You ask who this hero is? The one of Beethoven's "Fifth" or the
> C-minor of Brahms or Mahler's "First." The symphonic hero.[26]

In the study of Mahler's œuvre, an important effect of his verbal suggestions is that they also offer generally interesting glimpses into the composer's musical thought. One point that appears important to this discussion is Mahler's connecting the expression "mirror" to the symbolic hero's life. The mirror metaphor is comprehensive. The "clean mirror," to which Mahler refers here, may be comprehended as a symbol of wisdom and knowledge. The "truth" revealed in such a mirror is generally accepted as being of a higher order. A "dusty mirror," on the contrary, is often regarded as a symbol of the spirit darkened by ignorance.

However, the image in the mirror may also be seen as an indirect, incomplete, and even distorted reflection. One of the most famous statements of this view appears in the writings of Saul of Tarsus, or St. Paul, where he states that

> Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see
> face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I
> am fully known.[27]

To approach the foundations of human existence with the eyes of an alienated and at the same time clear-sighted onlooker, from a distance, and even as if through a mirror, is typical for Mahler's philosophical angle of incidence. In his work, the frequent musical naïveté based on references to childhood may also be seen as part of this picture. He often appears to be looking through the eyes of the perceptive child, like the one we know from Hans Christian Andersen's tale of *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

As mentioned earlier, Richard Specht is one to suggest such perspectives in Mahler's creative engagement with the *Wunderhorn* poems. The *Fisch-predigt* scherzo is another striking, instrumental example of this approach.

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[25]Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, transl. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley/Los Angeles/ London: University of California Press, 1989), p. 366.

[26]"Wer der Held ist? Der der Beethovenschen 'Fünften' oder der c-moll von Brahms oder der 'Ersten' von Mahler. Der sinfonische Held." Richard Specht, *Gustav Mahler*, note on p. 209.

[27]See 1 Corinthians 13:12, in the wording of *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (New York: Harper Paperbacks, 1984).

According to Natalie Bauer-Lechner, Mahler himself referred to exactly this movement as especially typical for his own affinity to musical impressions from his childhood:

> And Mahler continued: "Many of my things have absorbed the Bohemian music from the country of my childhood. In the 'Fischpredigt' this has especially struck me. The national flavor contained therein can be detected, in its rawest, most basic traits, in the tootling of Bohemian musicians."[28]

In a comprehensive analysis of the scherzo, Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht interprets Mahler's fascination with the *Fischpredigt* in connection with the composer's feeling of a lack of understanding and recognition in his own time.[29] However, in the broader context of the symphony, it must be argued that Mahler obviously takes the story also as a parable of a higher and more universal order. According to the views of Paul Bekker, this perspective is already implicated in the song itself. Bekker describes it as

> A depiction of the eternal monotony of life, the purposelessness of all striving, the futility and emptiness of existence. A bitter scorn on the prophecy of the solitary persons, who descend to the people in order to show them the way upwards. An entertaining description of the wide world in miniature, of its incapability of insight.[30]

In the composer's program notes to this symphony, this insight is presented through notions of the spirit of disbelief and renunciation. This strengthens one of the important, epistemological links to the *Fischpredigt* song. However, as the text is absent from the scherzo—and principally unknown to the new listener—a still more decisive hint must be embedded in the *music* itself. As already mentioned, the triple meter and the indication that

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[28]"Im Anschluß daran sagte Mahler: 'In viele meiner Sachen ist die böhmische Musik meiner Kindheitsheimat mit eingegangen. In der "Fischpredigt" ist mir's besonders aufgefallen. Das nationale Moment, welches darin steckt, läßt sich in seinen rohesten Grundzügen aus dem Gedudel der böhmischen Musikanten heraushören'." Quoted from Rudolf Stephan, *Meisterwerke der Musik: Mahler, II. Symphonie c-moll*, p. 7.

[29]Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, *Die Musik Gustav Mahlers* (Munich/Zurich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1982) p. 223.

[30]"Ein Bild des ewigen Einerlei des Lebens, der Zwecklosigkeit alles Strebens, der Vergeblichkeit und Leere des Daseins. Ein bitterer Hohn auf das Prophetentum der Einsamen, die hinuntersteigen zu den Menschen, um ihnen den Weg nach oben zu zeigen. Eine ergötzliche Schilderung der großen Welt im Kleinen, ihrer Unfähigkeit zu Erkenntnis." Bekker, *Gustav Mahler's Sinfonien*, p. 86.

the song has wit make it well suited to a scherzo movement. But these two factors will not in themselves be enough for a realization of Mahler's underlying message of the life-and-death perspective. What he really can make use of, however, are the ambiguities of the musical figures that are already present in his *Wunderhorn* song. The swirling movements of fishes and the whirling of streaming water are masterly rendered in music. In the symphony this is relegated to the scherzo which, like the song, is based on various principles of musical *perpetuum mobile*.

In his Mahler monograph, Theodor W. Adorno sees the scherzo of the Second Symphony as a prototype of Mahler's scherzi in general. The movement, he says, appears as an illustration of the futile way of the world:

> Parables of the course of the world appear in his music throughout as the aimlessly spinning, unstoppable movements, the *perpetuum mobile*. The empty turmoil, void of self-determination, is the eternally same. [...] This was already the way in which the scherzo of the Second Symphony was perceived; to an extreme degree later that of the Sixth.[31]

In this perspective, Mahler's scherzo pieces may be seen as rendering life as well as the world as spinning in purposeless, perpetual motion. As for the third movement of his Second Symphony, the composer himself confirmed exactly such views. To him, the key word of the movement is *dance*, not as in an elegant Viennese waltz, but rather as in its travesty: the aimless dance of life, in this case disguised as a diabolic Bohemian Ländler. In suppressing the words, the music has at the same time freed itself from the story of whimsical fishes and streaming currents: it has taken the decisive step into a universally founded depiction of the turbulent motions of *life itself*. "The almost ghostlike, incessant flow of the scherzo is wholly uncanny," writes Specht. "A musically created panta rei; a shadow-dance of life."[32]

In one of his letters to Max Marschalk, Mahler presents evocative suggestions as an additional key to the basic mood:

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[31]"Gleichnisse des Weltlaufs sind bei ihm durchweg die ziellos in sich kreisenden, unaufhaltsamen Sätze, das perpetuum mobile. Das leere Getreibe ohne Selbstbestimmung ist das Immergleiche. [...] So war bereits das Scherzo der Zweiten Symphonie empfunden; extrem dann das der Sechsten." Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik, Die musikalischen Monographien, Gesammelte Schriften 13* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1971), pp. 154-155.

[32]"Ganz unheimlich ist der fast gespenstige, unaufhörliche Fluß des Scherzo. Ein musiziertes panta rei; ein Schattentanz des Lebens." Richard Specht, *Gustav Mahler*, p. 217.

> When you then wake up from this wistful dream [the second
> movement] and have to return to the chaos of life, it may
> well happen that the ceaselessly moving, never-resting, forever
> incomprehensible turmoil of life becomes *horrifying* to you like the
> undulations of dancing shapes in a brightly lit ballroom into which
> you are looking from the dark night outside—from so large a
> *distance* that you *no* longer hear the *music*.[33]

This comment suggests that the thought-provoking, musically swirling
humor of the *Fischpredigt* story has now become a horrifying scherzando,
which may be likened to a surrealist experience of a secular dance deprived
of its music.

Many compositional devices converge to create this subtle connection. To
begin with, the scherzo—unlike the song—opens with a shocking timpani
signal, thus brutally tearing the listener away from the nostalgic mood of the
elegant second movement:
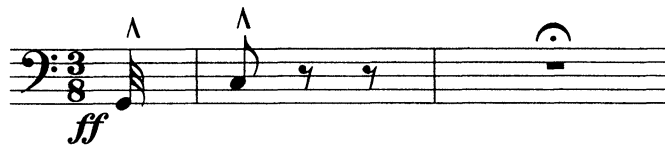
Example 1: Gustav Mahler, Second Symphony, third movement, mm. 1–2

The fanfare-like ascending fourth is an important trait throughout this
symphony. In the next couple of measures this signal is echoed once, in eight
notes, this time *on* the beat:
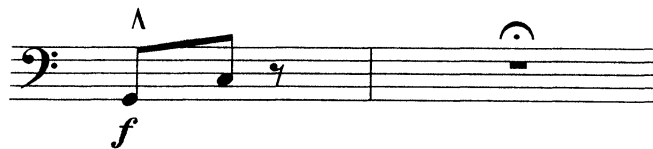
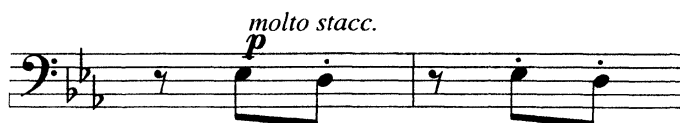**Example 2:** Mahler, II/3, mm. 3–4

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[33]"Wenn Sie dann aus diesem wehmütigen Traum aufwachen, und in das wirre Leben zurück
müssen, so kann es Ihnen leicht geschehen, daß Ihnen dieses unaufhörlich bewegte, nie
ruhende, nie verständliche Getriebe des Lebens *grauenhaft* wird, wie das Gewoge tanzender
Gestalten in einem hell erleuchteten Ballsaal, in den Sie aus dunkler Nacht hineinblicken
– aus so weiter *Entfernung,* da Sie die *Musik* hierzu *nacht* mehr hören!" Letter of March 26
1896, quoted from Rudolf Stephan, *Meisterwerke der Musik: Mahler, II. Symphonie c-moll,*
p. 80.

After this manifestation of discomforting uncertainty, the intervallic figure is turned into a swinging ostinato, beginning on the *offbeat*. From this point onwards, the music in the symphonic movement is identical with the opening of the song version:

Example 3: Mahler, II/3, mm. 5–7

Now the foundation has been laid for a basic motion that has the potential of becoming inexorably uniform. This dynamically subdued but still energetic impetus is presently counterbalanced by the descending minor second of the bassoons:

Example 4: Mahler, II/3, mm. 7–8

The second bassoon doubles the timpani part, just as the second clarinet in B♭ starts an intensifying, rhythmically distinct pedal point, diabolically intensified by biting *acciaccaturas*:

Example 5: Mahler, II/3, mm. 8–10

The large drum commences its inexorably measured beating:

Example 6: Mahler, II/3, mm. 9–11

Presently, a mechanically vibrating tremolo in sixteenth-notes is put into motion in the part of the first clarinet:

Example 7: Mahler, II/3, mm. 10–12

In this way—in the course of thirteen opening measures—it is as if a musical wheel is gradually put into revolving motion. Technically speaking, the initial shape of this machinery does not permeate the whole movement. Its physical effect, however, is certainly at play all the way through. Following Mahler's own verbal suggestions, it has been struck up for the aimless dance of life.

In the twelfth measure, an elegantly undulating melodic stream is introduced in the first violins. It floats across the bar lines, defying the ostinato figures in the other voices by the independence of its eternally floating motion:

Example 8: Mahler, II/3, mm. 12–16

In m. 31 Mahler introduces another revolving motion, this time in the second violins. Its construction may give associations to suggestive accompaniments from, for instance, Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* or his "Gretchen am Spinnrade," where the figures in the piano parts refer respectively to flowing waters, eternally spinning wheels, and the mysterious undercurrents of human life and emotions:

Example 9: Mahler, II/3, mm. 31–33

The opening phrase of the original *Fischpredigt* song becomes fully recognizable for the first time from m. 67 onwards, where the first clarinet doubles the first bassoon. The melodic shape suggests a semicircular motion. "St. Anthony preaches to the fishes," Mahler is said to have explained to Natalie Bauer-Lechner, "and his words immediately change into their own language, which sounds (in the clarinet) quiet drunk and tottering".[34]

Example 10: Mahler, II/3, mm. 67–69

By now, Mahler has established a whole spectrum of different rhythmic and melodic devices for creating the impression of a musical *perpetuum mobile*. He further intensifies this effect by means of the harmonic structure. In this regard, one striking example is his use of sequences in descending, whole-tone motions that seem to have the potential of going on forever. When manifesting for the first time, in the flute and cello parts, they cover the tetrachord G–F–Eb–Db before landing on C:

Example 11: Mahler, II/3, mm. 27–31

From this foundation, Mahler builds an expansive, symphonic movement, a comprehensive analysis of which would be outside the scope of this study.

To return to the mirror metaphor, which is so significant for an understanding of this composition, Natalie Bauer-Lechner recalls a conversation in which Mahler expanded on the ideas shared with Marschalk. Apparently to stress the sense of indirectness, he alluded to the impression one receives when

[34]"Der heilige Antonius predigt den Fischen, und seine Worte verwandeln sich sofort in ihre Sprache, die ganz besoffen, taumelig (in der Klarinette) erklingt [...]." Quoted from Rudolf Stephan, *Meisterwerke der Musik: Mahler, II. Symphonie c-moll*, p. 6.

watching dancing couples at a distance without being able to hear the music. He explained further that he related the absence of musical rhythm, which the beholder knows to accompany the movements, with the unreal quality of a disfigured mirror reflection:

> When you watch a dance through a window from afar, without hearing the accompanying music, the couples' rotations and movements, without the rhythm that would be the key to them, will appear chaotic and meaningless. To one who has lost himself and his happiness, the world appears in this way, as in a concave mirror, upside down, mad, and confused.[35]

This statement is an illuminating example of the relation between Mahler's verbal suggestions and his music. To give an epistemological key to this florid and rhythmically stringent piece, he chooses a metaphorical expression excluding not only the musical parameter of rhythm but even the music itself. Furthermore, Mahler's indications are also typical for his tendency to appear as an alienated and perspicacious spectator. He looks at the incomprehensible dance of life from a distance, while at the same time looking through it. This also accounts for his paradoxical description of this invigorating music appearing as mute for the perspicacious beholder: seen, but not heard. Here the mirror metaphor once again becomes of vital importance—this time not in terms of a truthfully clean reflection, but rather in its distorted version: "Now I know in part; then I shall know fully."

Mahler's musical devices, combined with his verbal suggestions referring to the *Resurrection* symphony as a whole, are thus highly significant when one regards the scherzo as a musical disclosure of "the spirit of disbelief, of denial." When considered as rooted in the legend of St. Anthony of Padua, the movement becomes transparent to the depiction of a secularization process taking place from the thirteenth century to Mahler's own, *fin-de-siècle* present:

1 In the traditional legend of St. Anthony and the fishes, the human congregation has failed, but the silent fishes recognize the saint's rhetorical gifts and are genuinely edified by his words.

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[35]"Wenn du aus der Ferne durch ein Fenster einem Tanz zusiehst, ohne daß du die Musik dazu vernimmst, so erscheint dir Drehung und Bewegung der Paare, zu denen dir der Rhytmus als Schlüssel fehlt, wirr und sinnlos. So erscheint einem, der sich und sein Glück verloren hat, die Welt wie im Hohlspiegel verkehrt, wahnsinnig und verworren." Quoted from Rudolf Stephan, *Meisterwerke der Musik: Mahler, II. Symphonie c-moll*, p. 77.

2 In "Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt," the poetic version as it appears in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, St. Anthony still has the power to summon the fishes. This time, however, *they* fail as well, and the saint's words thus prove completely to have lost their powers against the disbelief of the world. The words have been virtually muted, and the human and the animal congregations have become mirroring images of one another.

3 In his Second Symphony, Mahler uses material of the *Wunderhorn* song. But this time, he mutes the words of the song, and with it the story, when he creates a purely instrumental piece. Thus St. Anthony does not even come into sight any more—he has become invisible, at least to those who are not familiar with him through the *Fischpredigt* song.

The scherzo in Mahler's Second Symphony may thus be understood as a song deprived of its words, as—according to the composer's own statements —a resounding expression of music imagined without sound. For the *Fischpredigt*'s unfaithful congregation, St. Anthony's sermon seems to have worked in just this way. At the same time, this unheard music appears as a brilliantly sounding voice, giving utterance to the inexpressible abyss of the meaningless dance of secularized earthly life. In the symphony's life-and-death perspective, the scherzo movement becomes a subtle voicing of the *lack of* religious experience—of the aimless dance of a life deprived of profound, spiritual guidance. Seen in relation to the ancient legend, it may, then, be regarded as a musical depiction of the culmination of a secularization process leading up to the composer's present. Moreover, the mirror, one of the important metaphors in Mahler's thought, becomes the principal simile here. In the words of the song, the unfaithful fishes appear as a mirror image of St. Anthony's faithless congregation; in the symphonic movement, the general purposelessness of a life without guidance is presented as a musical reflection of the aimlessly whimsical fishes in their element of incessant currents and streams. In this way, the ancient legend of human apostasy is musically transformed and transfigured into a *fin-de-siècle* image of antireligious experience—into a contemporary sermon on secularization and disbelief.

As Mahler stated in a letter to a friend, he felt that in the scenario depicted in this movement, life becomes entirely purposeless, frighteningly spooky. "Perhaps," he intimated, "you even startle with a shrill exclamation of

disgust."[36] The musical equivalent to the incident to which Mahler refers is a dissonance in *fff*, heard at the climax of the impressive crescendo that builds up after rehearsal cue no. 49. Adorno describes this outburst as "an instrumental cry of the devastated" and observes that "the musical Self, the We that resonates from within the symphony, collapses."[37] This chilling moment anticipates horrifying passages of the last movement, marked *Im Tempo des Scherzo's* (In the tempo of the scherzo).

This leads full circle, back to the introduction of this essay and Paul Bekker's reading of the movements of Mahler's symphonies as paths to, and extrications from, the respective finales. The scherzo of Mahler's Second Symphony both opens up to and springs from the *Resurrection*, not only by way of an underlying recognition, but also through significant elements of the musical structure. Thankfully however, before reaching the overwhelming drama of the last movement, the work's symbolic protagonist is exposed to the intervening, clarifying *Urlicht*.

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[36]"Sinnlos wird Ihnen da das Leben, und ein grauenhafter Spuk, aus dem Sie vielleicht mit einem Schrei des Ekels auffahren." Letter to Max Marschalk of March 26 1896, quoted from Rudolf Stephan, *Meisterwerke der Musik: Mahler, II. Symphonie c-moll*, p. 78. See also the recollections of Natalie Bauer-Lechner, *Erinnerungen an Gustav Mahler*, p. 77.

[37]"[Das Scherzo] kuliminiert im instrumentalen Aufschrei des Verzweifelten. Das musikalische Selbst, das Wir, das aus der Symphonie tönt, bricht nieder." Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik*, p. 155.

Music, Religious Experience, and Transcendence in Ben Jonson's *Masque of Beautie*: A Case Study in Collaborative Form

Anthony Johnson

"Masques," Andrew Sabol once suggested, "should not be evaluated solely for their literary merit, or for their music, or even their scenic designs or dancing, but rather on the integration of all these elements."[1] The present essay will attempt to further the understanding of this integration by examining the early masque music of one Jacobean composer, Alfonso Ferrabosco the younger, in relation to the existing textual and pictorial evidence relating to the same occasion: Ben Jonson's *Masque of Beautie*. It is a study which, for the simple reason that not all the materials surrounding the performance have survived, can never be more than incomplete. Yet it is hoped that, nevertheless, the attempt may shed at least a little light from an interarts perspective on the transcendent, quasi-religious, experience which seems to have been one of the main achievements of both early opera and its sibling, early Jacobean masque.

> "When opera began, voice, psyche, and the subject as a whole were at one with the hidden regions of the world. By virtue of this conjunction there was no unconscious in early opera, no psyche at odds with itself. Instead there was only an extension of human powers into parts of the world hidden from the senses."[2]

In 1609, Ben Jonson prefaced the *First Book of Ayres* of his friend, Alfonso Ferrabosco the younger, with a brief dedicatory poem. At the time the

[1]A.J. Sabol, ed., *Songs and Dances for the Stuart Masque: An Edition of Sixty-Three Items of Music for the English Court Masque from 1604-1641* (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1959), p. 18.

[2]Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 9.

poet and the composer were in regular contact, having just worked together on the text and music to five of the major courtly entertainments of the early Jacobean period—the *Masque of Blacknesse* (1605), *Hymenaei* (1606), the *Masque of Beautie* (1608), the *Haddington Masque* (1608), and the *Masque of Queenes* (1609)—and Jonson's acknowledgment of Ferrabosco in the texts of the last two masques of this series testifies to his satisfaction with his collaborator's compositions. Nor can Jonson have been too dissatisfied with his own contribution to the *Ayres*, for he later republished it in his *Epigrammes* (CXXX)—an honor that was by no means accorded to all of the poet's dedicatory poems—including it on page 812 of his meticulously edited folio *Workes*.[3]

Over the course of sixteen well-rounded lines, Jonson traced out a history of music from its mythological inception at the hands of Amphion up to the 17th-century present. *En route*, he anatomized the fabled virtues of music as a medium: reminding the reader of its Orphic ability to tame wild beasts, not to mention its affective powers over the human spirit. And in a final flourish he acknowledged its Pythagorean role as the "soule of heauen" (l. 11): ordering the movements of the seven known planets as well as the eighth sphere of the fixed stars, and containing all within the "harmonie" of the ninth, crystalline sphere (ll. 12-14), even though, as Jonson hastened to remind his reader, to go thus far is no more than to commend the art of music itself (ll. 14-16).

At this point, just two lines before the end of the epigram, it might be forgivable to feel a certain amount of alarm about the fact that Jonson has not yet praised the composer. But this, of course, is his strategy. He is holding back in order to capitalize on the gentle push of the ninth, and final, couplet:

> [...] when I haue said, the proofes of all these bee
> Shed in thy Songs; 'tis true: but short of thee. (ll. 17-18)

In its brevity and implicative richness, this is a redeeming closure. Yet it is clear that Jonson is playing a dangerous game and that his overall rhetorical strategy is not unproblematic. It would be perfectly possible, for instance, to interpret the disingenuousness of this epigram as artlessness, its polish as superficiality, or its understatement as flatness. It would be understandable if,

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[3]Ben Jonson, *Workes* (London, 1616). Unless otherwise stated, all references to Jonson's work are taken from this edition and will be included in the main body of the text, followed by page numbers and, where necessary for the argument, line numbers. Line numbers, which are not marked in the 1616 Folio, are of the verse lines only and exclude all peritext.

on an initial hearing, its lightness and urbanity of tone sounded like nothing more than courtly compliment. And it would be quite comprehensible if its elegantly rendered envisioning of music as an interlocking of the speculative, mundane, humane, and instrumental domains were to seem, at first glance, like the sort of commonplace that would have been familiar to any educated reader with no more than a basic knowledge of, say, a popular work like Thomas Morley's 1597 *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practical Music*. What, we may well wonder, is Jonson up to?

One answer might be that by deferring his encomium of Ferrabosco to the closing lines, the poet sends the reader (with the composer now firmly in mind) back to the beginning of the poem, inviting a reconsideration of the musical commonplaces that are encountered, giving them a new specificity of reference, and opening them up to reveal new depths. In what ways, we are encouraged to ask, does Ferrabosco's music manifest its constructive, therapeutic powers? In what ways can Ferrabosco's music act as a soul of heaven? How is it possible for the composer to have moved beyond the commonplaces themselves? These are questions to which I shall return later by examining the music itself.[4]

For the moment, however, I would like to consider another, more poetically based, answer as to what is achieved by the rhetorical strategy employed in the epigram: namely, the idea that by resisting the temptation to foreground the verbal felicities of his work, Jonson is able to focus the reader's attention on its structure—and in particular on its *enactment* of meaning. In fact, the end of the poem offers something of a paradigm in this respect, for having told us that the eight spheres of the cosmos are enclosed and transcended by the ninth sphere of harmony, the poet's ninth couplet (in praise, of course, of the composer) mimes out the point by enclosing and transcending the description of the art of music which has been completed in the eighth. Structure, in other words (especially insofar as it relates to the disposition of the parts of the poems, or to their numerical symbolism), appears to have a significant role in the Jonsonian poetic. And because Jonson's structural mimesis of the numbers and patterns constituting the universe enacts the very numbers and patterns which were generally believed (especially in the poet's younger days) to constitute the "real" universe, it therefore seems to be the case that some of his work, at any rate, may have

gained power from its contiguity with that reality. That is to say, in some genres Jonson may have tended towards the metonymic rather than the metaphorical, using the silent argument of formal structure to gesture beyond language by using an aesthetic—familiar enough to architects and musicians of the period—based on Pythagorean mathematics.[5] By virtue of this movement beyond language—this falling in with the forces of the divine order— Jonson could therefore deservedly be seen to partake of an aesthetics of the ineffable.

> "Symbolism, in its modern sense, at least, entails a metaphorical leap from one realm to another, unconnected realm. Renaissance significance instead comes from something more like a tracing, at root metonymic, of connections out from a center point to adjacent things."[6]

The genre in which Jonson most clearly gestured towards the metonymic is the court masque, of which he produced at least twenty-six between 1605 and 1632, many in collaboration with the architect, Inigo Jones. In 1978 the theater historian, John Orrell—who was studying the disposition of the lines in Jonson's *Hymenaei*—made the discovery that the masque was "laid out like a Palladian building in the proportions of the musical consonances"; and my own work since that time has revealed that all the early masques seem to have been governed by significant numerological or proportional schemes.[7]

Hence, to put it simply, the *Masque of Blacknesse*—which was organized around the idea of a meeting between the sun kingdom of Britain (represented by James I), and the moon kingdom of Ethiopia (represented by his wife, Anne of Denmark)—is constructed on the number line of thirteen (representing the lunar cycle), intersected at strategic points by the number line of twelve

[5]For discussions of these matters see, in particular, Rudolph Wittkower's classic study, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1949), and of S.K. Heninger, Jr, *Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics* (San Marino, CA.: Huntington Library, 1974) .

[6]Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song*, p. 9.

[7]See especially John Orrell, "The Musical Canon of Proportion in Jonson's *Hymenaei*," *English Language Notes* 15 (1978): 174; and Anthony Johnson: "'*Angles, Squares*, or *Roundes*': Studies in Jonson's Vitruvianism," doctoral dissertation, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1987). The material in the following paragraphs has been abstracted from my book, *Ben Jonson: Poetry and Architecture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 79-218 and 231-238.

(representing the solar cycle). The *Masque of Beautie*—a celebration of courtly harmony—is based on the number line of eight (symbolic of music) intersected at strategic points by a zodiacal twelve. The marriage masques *Hymenaei* and the *Haddington Masque* are orientated around the number lines of sixteen and eleven respectively; while the *Masque of Queenes* uses the number line of twelve, this time bisected by the triangular numbers, as a central part of its conceit.

What is exciting about all of this is that, where descriptions or drawings of the scenography for the early Jacobean masques survive, they reinforce the idea that Jonson and Jones (or even, sometimes, William Portington, the King's Master Carpenter) were collaborating in an informed way to match the visual and textual constructions. Jones's drawings for the triangular seating arrangement of the twelve masquers in the *Masque of Queenes*, for instance, are complemented by Jonson's praise of the "sweet, and gracious *pyramede* / Wherein they sit, it being the sou'reigne place" (*Workes*, p. 958), and this comment is itself framed within the text by a speech of seventy-eight lines (that is, the number needed to form a triangle with twelve rows).[8] Or, to take another Jonesian creation, Vulcan's sphere in the *Haddington Masque* with its radius of 3 x 3 feet clearly acts metonymically: its observance of "due proportion to the *spheare* of heauen" (*Workes*, p. 941) linking it to Plato's prescription in the *Timaeus* that the universe approximates to the cube of 3 (i.e., 27). This, in turn, neatly emblemizes the numerological message of Jonson's text, in which the total length is 297 lines: that is, 11 (the basic epi-thalamic unit of this marriage masque) times 27 (the number of the universe).[9]

Returning, then, to the epigram to Ferrabosco, it seems clear that the idea of a harmonic ninth couplet including and transcending the eighth accords with Jonson's tectonic concerns in 1609. Indeed, on a closer consideration of the *Masque of Beautie*, it quickly becomes apparent that Jonson had been

[8]For Jones's illustration, see Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court,* vol. I (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press / London: Sotheby Park Bernet, 1973), p. 130. For a discussion of Jonson's triangular forms, see Johnson, *Poetry and Architecture,* pp. 176-196 and Figures 9-10.

[9]Perhaps the clearest explanation of the way in which this works is given by Macrobius—one of Jonson's favored sources in the early masques (see, for example, note 11 below)—in the *Somnium Scipionis*: "Timaeus, in Plato's dialogue by the same name, says that the God who made the World-Soul intertwined odd and even in its make-up: that is, using the numbers two and three as a basis, he alternated the odd and even numbers from two to eight and from three to twenty-seven" (*Macrobius: Commentary on the Dream of Scipio,* trans. W.H. Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), I, vi. [2]).

playing with the same idea in the previous year. For on that occasion, the King and his entourage had been entertained in the new Whitehall Banqueting House by the sudden appearance of a wondrous island of beauty in the center of which, on a resplendent throne, had sat the Queen, surrounded by fifteen of the most powerful aristocratic women in the country. Above her had been ranged eight "*Elements* of *Beautie*" (*Workes*, p. 905); surmounted by an image of "Harmonia," her robe "painted full of *Figures*," her head compassed by a crown of gold set with seven jewels, representing the planets, and a "*Lyra*" in her hand (*Workes*, p. 906). The exact appearance of this instrument in Jonson's entertainment must remain a matter for conjecture, as Jonson's source for the image was Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, in which the text described Harmonia as holding "*una lira doppia di quindici corde*," while the illustrator, as D.J. Gordon has pointed out, had substituted a viola da gamba.[10] In terms of the representation of Harmonia within the Jacobean court, however, this ambiguity may have been a productive one, because the Queen herself was widely known to have played the lyra viol, and the total image was almost certainly intended to figure the Queen herself as the central emblem of harmony in the masque.[11]

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[10]See Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, Piero Buscali, ed., with a Preface by Mario Praz (Milan: I Tascabili degli Editori Associati, 1992), p. 26, and D.J. Gordon, "The Imagery of Ben Jonson's *Masques of Blacknesse and Beautie*," in *The Renaissance Imagination*, Stephen Orgel, ed. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1975; rpt. 1980), p. 153.

[11]For Anne of Denmark as a lyra violist see Peter Walls, "London, 1603-1649," in C. Price, ed., *The Early Baroque Era*, Man and Music Series (London, 1993; rpt. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994), p. 289; and for a useful account of the imagery of Harmonia in relation to Renaissance music, see Kristin Rygg, *Masqued Mysteries Unmasked: Early Modern Music Theater and its Pythagorean Subtext* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2000), pp. 194-198. In the case of Jonson, who added printed marginalia to the *Masque of Beautie* beside his description of Harmonia, we are, in fact, given a precise clue as to the tradition he is invoking for this musical (and celestial) conceit. For after citing Ripa, he refers us back to Pythagoras and Book Two of Macrobius's *Somnium Scipionis*, on "the seuen *Planets* and their *Spheares*" (*Workes*, p. 906). Interestingly enough, although from a later date, Inigo Jones paid careful attention to the numerology and iconography of Harmonia in the chapters on music (p. 333) and the number of the muses (pp. 491-494) in his 1614 Italian copy of Plutarch's *Moralia*: noting, for instance, "why ye ancient*es* put musicall instrument*es* in ye hands of ye stattues of ye godes" beside Plutarch's comment that there is no work so like that of the gods as the production of consonance (p. 334). On this see further *Three Volumes Annotated by Inigo Jones: Vasari's "Lives" (1568), Plutarch's "Moralia" (1614), Plato's Republic (1554)*, Anthony Johnson, ed. (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 1997)—hereafter referred to as *Annotations*—pp. xl-xli, 2, 52, and 60-64.

Yet beyond this, in the context of the 1609 *Ayres,* a further richness arises. For Ferrabosco himself was perhaps the most accomplished English lyra violist of his day. He was also a member of the King's Musick as well as the music teacher to Prince Henry; and it had, in fact, been Ferrabosco who had written the lion's share of the songs for the *Masque of Beautie* (five of which were included in the *Ayres*).[12] Under such circumstances, then, it would not seem unreasonable for Ferrabosco to have to read an allusion to the masque—and even to himself as a harmonic guide—in Jonson's epigram.

> "order, disposition &c. Are generall and commune termes and thearfore have thear diffinitiones in the common & generall siense caled Metaphysik."[13]

It is unsurprising that the Neoplatonic literary and architectural patterns surveyed in the previous section should bear so many resemblances to the "magical" aesthetic which Gary Tomlinson has found in much Renaissance music, especially that employed by the relatively small cache of composers who were directly concerned with the birth of what was to become known as opera. For the metalanguage of "numbers" and "proportions" was equally at home in all three disciplines, while the coherence of universal vision—perhaps most markedly at the beginning of the 17th century, when it was significantly under threat—offered the possibility of a conceptual meeting point between the three areas that was to be lost for ever by the late 1620s. It should be remembered that even Kepler, who was to be responsible for the *Rudolphine Tables* of 1628 that effectively delivered the death blow to metonymically based theories of a "real" relationship between harmonic form and the structure of the universe, was still trying desperately to keep the system intact when he published his work on the harmony of the universe in 1619,

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[12]For Ferrabosco, see Peter Walls, "London, 1603-1649," pp. 275, 281, and 291; and for discussions and transcriptions of Ferrabosco's early masque songs see Mary Chan, *Music in the Theatre of Ben Jonson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), especially pp. 138-231. For the purposes of the present essay I will restrict myself to a consideration of Ferrabosco's printed ayres rather than the manuscript versions (also discussed by Chan) found in Christ Church Oxford, MS Mus. 439.

[13]Inigo Jones, annotation to Vitruvius, *I Dieci libri dell'architettura, tradotti e commentati da Daniele Barbaro* (Venice, 1567), Book I, chapter ii, p. 27. Jones's copy is in the library at Chatsworth House, Derbyshire.

dedicating it to James I.[14] And as Kepler had tried to find new means of keeping these old models together, so the Neoplatonic moves of the collaborators on the court masque were based on a negotiation with the ideas of the past rather than an acceptance of any monolithic system. However, before moving on directly to a consideration of the relation of Ferrabosco's music to these ideas, it is perhaps just as well to come down to earth with a consideration of the sorts of practical compositional restraints that may be encountered by those working within the form.

In what is arguably the most systematic study of its kind to date, Peter Walls has amassed and interpreted the surviving data concerning the role of music in the court masque of the Jacobean and Caroline periods. Characteristically, he has reminded us, the masque has what amounts to a tripartite structure. It is initiated by a brief "loud noise" of wind instruments, which accompanies the King as he enters and moves to his place, where he witnesses an antimasque. Designed as a contrast to the main masque, the antimasque comprises either a "spectacle of strangeness" or a "low induction," in which a dance in erratic measures occurs, occasionally supplemented by the "rude music" of a low-life ballad. There then follows a transformation scene in which the strange, comic, or low setting of the antimasque is replaced—after a harmonious "blast" of music—by the masque proper. In it is enacted a little emblematic narrative, which ends in a set dance by the aristocratic participants in the masque. (This section usually makes great use of music in the form of—often declamatory—ayres that further the narrative or introduce the dances, and of music to cover the noise of shifting scenery.) The third section which, historically, formed the core idea for masques, consists of the revels, which are sometimes punctuated by songs. In these, aristocrats from the court dance with the aristocratic masquers until, at the end of the evening, the masquers retire in a closing set dance and the masque is finished off with a song.[15]

Even from such a brief summary it should be plain that there is a great potential here for integrated musical design parallel to that afforded to the scenographer or poet. However, as Walls has made abundantly clear, the idea of an overarching musical vision is generally subverted by the delegation of different compositional tasks to different musicians. The deviser of the set

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[14]On this, see Johnson, *Poetry and Architecture*, p. 229; and *Johannes Kepler, The Harmony of the World*, ed. and tr. E. J. Aiton, A. M. Duncan and J. V. Field (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1997).

[15]See Peter Walls, *Music in the English Courtly Masque 1604-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

dances in the main masque may have also composed the tunes and determined the measures (although the task of arranging them may have been left to someone else). The antimasque dances or songs may have been the domain of another group of musicians, while the dances for the revels or the songs of the masque proper may have necessitated bringing in even more composers or arrangers. Indeed, in light of the fact that these masques were some of the only occasions in which all of the members of the royal musical establishment played together,[16] it would have been natural to allow them to spotlight their multeity of talents in the best possible way.

To say this, however, is merely to acknowledge that the placing of the music within the tectonics of the masque, and therefore its relation to the symbolic "meanings" generated by the text, was—in the early years of James's reign, at any rate— largely controlled by the poet. This does not preclude the possibility that Jonson, for instance, may have wished to coordinate his ideas with those of his collaborators or that masquing ideas were discussed by several different parties, including architects, musicians, and dancers alike. As an initial indication that such things did occur, I would briefly like to restore a lost reading from the field of architecture. In later, sadder, days, when Jonson and Jones had fallen out with each other, the architect attacked his former associate in a doggerel verse which claimed:

> No ill thou couldst so taske dwells not in mee,
> And there the storehouse of your plott*es* wee see.[17]

In this statement Jones seems to be denying the faults for which Jonson has taken him to task at the same time as, more importantly, he takes credit for a number of "Jonson's" ideas. Later on Jonson satirized Jones—in a parody of Pythagoras's discovery of musical proportion in a blacksmith's forge (as narrated by Macrobius)—by imaging him as a lame, Vulcanesque, "*Iniquo Vitruvius*" beating out time on an anvil. Here, much of Jonson's sting seems to derive from the fact that a similar scenario, credited explicitly to Jones in Jonson's folio, lay behind the far more positive resonances of the *Haddington Masque* in which Vulcan made a perfectly proportioned sphere

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[16]Walls, *English Courtly Masque*, p. 5.

[17]"To his false friend mr Ben Jonson" (ll. 13-14), printed in *Ben Jonson*, C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, eds., 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-1953)—referred to hereafter as H&S—vol. XI, p. 385, ll. 13-14. The meaning of the lines has long been obscured by the fact that Jonson's editors made an unwarranted alteration from "mee" (in B.M. Harley MS. 6057, f. 30), to "thee" in their own edition.

while the dancing masters Jerome Herne and Thomas Giles—"in the persons of the two *Cyclopes*" (*Workes*, p. 942)—beat time with hammers to what appear to have been Ferrabosco's tunes.[18] In the light of this brief description it is easy to see that there may have been a fair degree of give and take (and, more importantly, of synergy) between the practitioners in the early days of the Jacobean masque, as well as a level of co-operation which could not later be sustained.

With respect to Ferrabosco himself, Jonson seems to have been more sympathetic, and the poet's occasional comments on the composer (which have been neatly gathered together by Peter Walls),[19] credit him with precisely the sort of recondite capacities which Jonson's demanding texts required. Thus the Quarto of *Hymenaei* regards the composer as a man "planted by himselfe, in that divine *Spheare*; & mastring all the spirits of *Musique* .... Wherein, what his Merit made to the *Soule* of our *Invention*, would aske to be exprest in Tunes no lesse ravishing then his."[20] From Jonson (who was later to argue fiercely with Jones about the proprietorial rights of poet and architect in the composition of the "body" and "soul" of masques),[21] this was praise indeed—although, on the other hand, Jonson presumably realized that he would have been on weak ground had he contested Ferrabosco on the question of musical souls.[22] But perhaps even more important was the poet's attribution of the quality of ravishment to Ferrabosco's music. For "ravishment" was a loaded word for Jonson, connoting ideas of transcendental

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[18]These events are discussed in more detail in Johnson, *Poetry and Architecture,* pp. 164-165. For "*Iniquo Vitruvius,*" see *Love's Welcome at Bolsover,* H&S VII, l. 75.

[19]Walls, *English Courtly Masque,* pp. 33-36.

[20]H&S VII, p. 232.

[21]On this see especially D.J. Gordon's famous essay, "Poet and Architect: The Intellectual Setting of the Quarrel between Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones," in *The Renaissance Imagination,* pp. 77-101. A slightly less polarized view of the argument is presented in Johnson, *Poetry and Architecture,* pp. 13-17 and 218-219; and *Annotations,* p. lvi ff.

[22]Even Jones, in an underlining in the preface to his 1554 Italian edition of Plato's *Republic,* appears to have conceded that poetry is"*la prima musica*" (*Annotations,* p. 76); and indeed, if Gary Tomlinson is correct in his carefully argued view that for Renaissance listeners of a Ficinian persuasion, music, as well as words, "can convey rational significance"— *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 101 ff.—then there would have been precious little difference between the affective qualities of transcendental sound or transcendental language.

beauty that were redolent of Plato's *Phaedo* or *Symposium*.[23] It seems significant that—away from the masques—the poet was to entrust one of his deepest spiritual disclosures, "A Hymne to God the Father," to the composer.[24]

Beyond Ferrabosco as he appeared in Jonson's eyes, however, it is worth pausing a little to consider Ferrabosco's compositional boldness in its own right. As a British-born Italian (with a father who had been a famous musician at the Elizabethan court), it appears that he was quite well abreast of contemporary developments in both cultures. He seems to have exploited his advantage, experimenting in the early years of the 17th century with a type of declamatory writing that came increasingly to resemble the new "*stylo recitativo*." However, in this respect it is perhaps salutary to avoid too much chronologically based evolutionism since, on the one hand, "Ferrabosco's most uncompromisingly declamatory songs are not English at all, but [...] Italian," as Peter Walls has argued, and, on the other hand, the linguistic differences between English and Italian (or, at least, 17th-century speculations on the subject), may have created the space for a somewhat divergent declamatory tradition.[25]

Nor was Ferrabosco's achievement, of course, limited to vocal music. He was, after all, pre-eminently a string player, teacher, and writer, who appears to have been willing to experiment with compromised fret positions (presumably approximating increasingly to equal temperament) in order to facilitate harmonious modulations around the cycle of fifths to the more distant keys. In an article that is startling in its suggestiveness for the music of the English masque, Christopher Field has argued that this movement was metaphorized by contemporaries as a "circumnavigation" of the musical globe or even, for late-16th-century Italian theorists like Girolamo Roselli, as "*la Musica sferica*": a new music of the spheres that enabled a smooth flow around the twelve semitones. Bearing in mind that as late as 1619, as we have

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[23]For ravishment in Jonson, see Richard S. Peterson, *Imitation and Praise in the Poems of Ben Jonson* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 72-74; and Johnson, *Poetry and Architecture*, pp. 25, 28, 50, 85, 87-88, 91, and 107.

[24]See H&S, VIII, p. 129; *Alfonso Ferrabosco II: Manuscript Songs*, Ian Spink, ed., *The English Lute Songs* II/19 (London, 1966), no. XV and p. 42; and Bruce Bellingham, "Convention and Transformation in Ferrabosco's Four-Part Fantasias," in *John Jenkins and His Time: Studies in English Consort Music*, Andrew Ashbee and Peter Holman, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 135.

[25]Walls, *English Courtly Masque*, pp. 67 and 86-103.

seen, Kepler was still attempting to reform rather than reject the idea of the music of the spheres as a reality—and bearing in mind that, for Field, "the most heroic of all the voyages of harmonic discovery recorded in English sources" was the younger Ferrabosco's fantasia "On the Hexachord," in which "the players circle through all the notes [...] as in a perpetual motion" —the obsession of court masques with universal forms (and the association of Ferrabosco with such a project) begin to take on a vivid, and exciting, contemporaneity.[26]

Armed, then, with some knowledge of what lies behind the apparent nonchalance of Ben Jonson's praise of his friend, I will now turn to reassess the question of Ferrabosco's collaborative role in the creation of the *Masque of Beautie*.

"all the secrets of Arte consiste in proportionaliti"[27]

In the *Masque of Beautie* one cannot really talk of an antimasque, yet there is nevertheless a very clear structural division in the work. The first 120 lines of the script are taken up by a prelude in which the winds recapitulate the story of the *Masque of Blacknesse* (which, although it had been performed three years earlier, had originally been planned to complement the *Masque of Beautie*). Here the audience is alerted to the fact that the twelve beauties from the previous masque, augmented by four, had been lost and led astray by the envious Night, but were now approaching the court on a floating island.[28]

A large black curtain then falls away, the hall is flooded with light, and the masque proper begins on a moment of wordless intensity. With a blast of what Jonson describes as "loud *Musique* " (*Workes*, p. 907), sixteen masquers appear. Their skin lightened by the "scientiall" beams of James, the sun king (*Workes*, p. 898), they are placed within the eight squares of an elaborately constructed throne at the center of the island of beauty. Thinking in terms of line numbers, it is clear that this moment divides the 200-line text into a 3 : 2 ratio which Jonson—who had annotated the relevant passage in his Philander

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[26]For materials in this paragraph, see Christopher Field, "Jenkins and the Cosmography of Harmony," in *John Jenkins and His Time*, pp. 8-9, 24.

[27]Jones, annotation to Vitruvius, *I Dieci libri dell'architettura*, Book III, introduction, p. 100.

[28]For a detailed numerological analysis of these two masques, see Johnson, *Poetry and Architecture*, pp. 115-139.

edition of Vitruvius's *De architectura libri decem*—knew to define the
interval of a perfect fifth *(diapente)*.[29] All that was needed as a minimum
requirement to ensure collaborative synergy at this moment would have been
(and almost certainly included) the employment of this interval by the
musicians who "were placed in the *Arbors*" of the island (*Workes*, p. 907).

As if this were not enough, Jonson also makes it clear that the throne of
beauty (which, we may remember, supported a complex image of Harmonia),
rotated with a "circular motion" of its own: "imitating that which we call
Motum mundi," while its steps, with torch-bearing Cupids on them, "had a
motion contrary, with *Analogy, ad motum Planetarum*" (*Workes*, p. 907).
Technically, the throne was realized through the skills of William Portington,
the King's Master Carpenter, although the idea was Jonson's own and may
be traced with some precision to a previously unnoticed passage in a book
which was well known to him. For the chapter on the universe and the planets
in his Barbaro edition of Vitruvius's *De architectura*—complete with its
contrary movements (on an ascending staircase of degrees) of the "planets"
against that of the zodiac, not to mention its diagrams of celestial motion—is
glossed in Jonson's hand.[30]

Nor should it be forgotten that the new Jacobean masquing house in which
all this was taking place may have echoed the entire collaborative conceit, as
it was 40 ft long and 120 ft wide (thus exhibiting the proportion of 1 : 3—a
double octave), while the Doric and superimposed Ionic scheme of its columns
may well have been consciously complemented, extended, and feminized by
the pilasters on Jonson's throne "*representing the* Elements *of* Beauty; *which
aduanced vpon the* Ionick, *and being* females, *had the* Corinthian *order*"

[29]See Jonson's *M. Vitruvii Pollionis de architectura libri decem*, Guglielmi Philandri
Castilionij, ed. (Lyons, 1586), Book I, chapter i, p. 4 (now at the DMS Watson Library,
University of London).

[30]See Jonson's copy of Vitruvius's *De architectura libri decem*, Daniele Barbaro, ed.
(Venice, 1567), Book IX, chapter iv, pp. 284-285 (now at Boston Public Library). In view
of the fact that Jonson expressly concerns himself with the way in which the disappearance
of signs "below" the earth are always accompanied by the emergence of contrary
("contrariae") signs forced upward by the revolution of the sky; and in view of the fact that
Jonson underlines Vitruvius's point that there is a *necessary* single power simultaneously
controlling both the rising and setting of the signs ("Namque uis una, & *necessitas* utrimque
simul orientem, & occidentem perficit" p. 284; Jonson's emphasis), it would seem highly
likely that he has the complex motion of the throne of beauty in mind here.

(*Workes*, p. 905).[31] Jonson's and Portington's whirling astral invention would
have been matched in the higher echelons of the throne by the eighth element
of beauty, "PERFECTIO," with the signs of the zodiac wrapped around her
body and a compass in her hand, drawing a circle (*Workes*, p. 906). From the
point of view of structural metonymy as well as overt symbolism, then, this
transcendental and transformational moment offers a beautifully conceived
enactment of the universal harmony. It is a vision that, as D.J. Gordon has
compellingly shown, also owes a great deal to Jonson's reading of Ficino: not
only through the iconographical detail of the island of beauty, but also—as
will become apparent in what follows—through the thematic development of
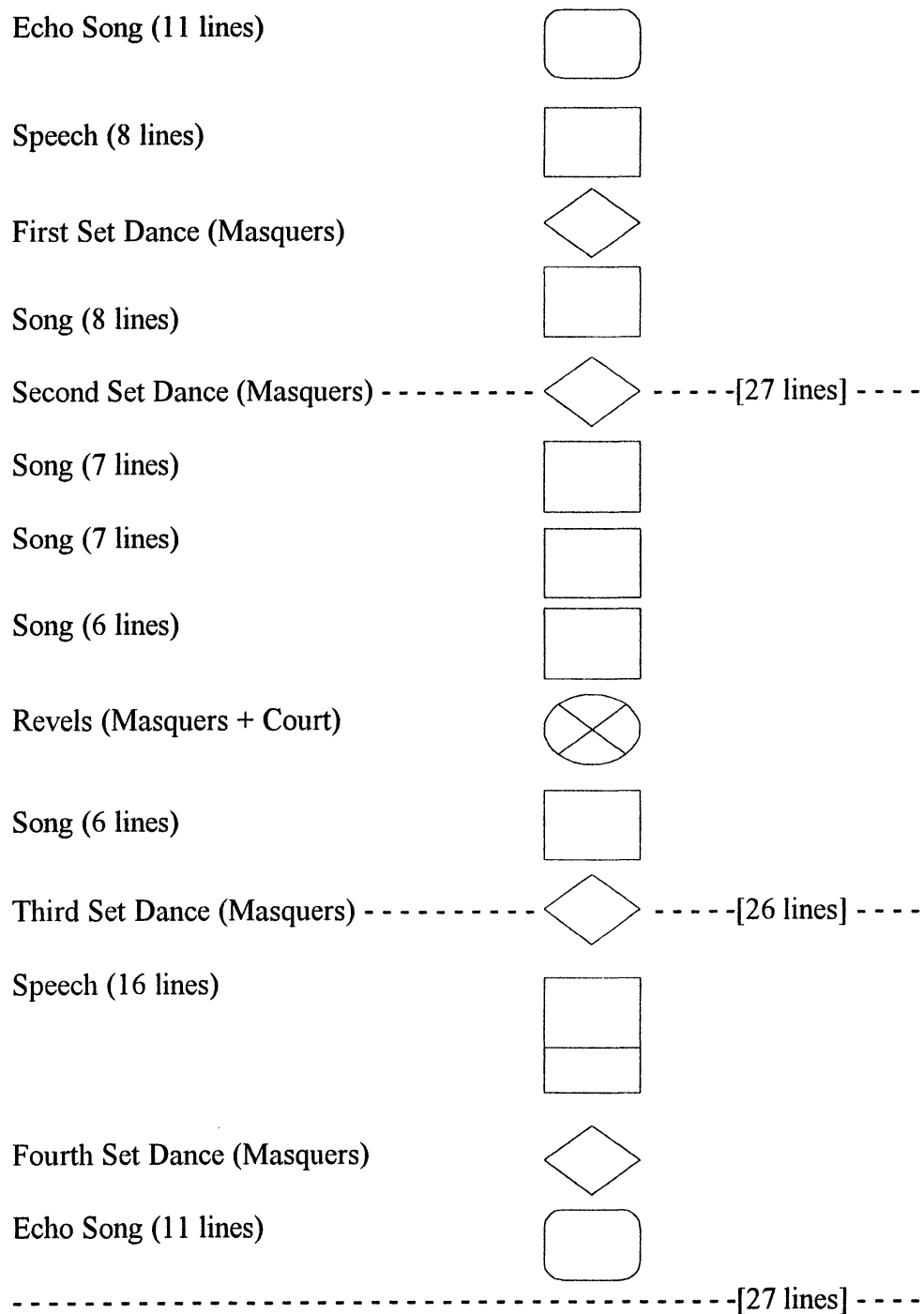the succeeding narrative and the unfolding of subsequent events.[32]

"Harmony a heauenly thinge"[33]

From a numerological point of view the eighty lines of the masque proper
may be taken as a fitting emblem of music: the symbolic representation of the
interval of an octave. The main bulk is taken up by music in the form of seven
songs (totaling fifty-six lines). These are introduced by twenty-four spoken
lines and interspersed with four set dances along with the revels, which here
comprise an undisclosed number of "galliards, *and* coranto's" (*Workes*, p.
909). A closer look at the disposition of the entire masque segment reveals an
almost palindromic form—[11 + 8 + 8] + [(7 + 7 + 6) + 6] + [16 + 11] lines
—which are bisected by the second and third set dances respectively so that
they fall into 27 + 26 + 27 lines (see Figure 1, below). Two sets of twenty-
seven—the Platonic number of the universe—moving in contrary directions
would seem to be entirely appropriate as a numerical emblem to accompany
the whirling throne on the island of beauty. And in fact, the twenty-seven-line
units do seem to be well mirrored, the first comprising an eleven-line echo
song followed by an eight-line speech (opening the dances) and an eight-line
song; the second consisting of a sixteen-line speech (closing the dances) and
an eleven-line echo song. Nor need this reading seem far-fetched when it is

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[31]See John Orrell, *The Human Stage: English Theatre Design, 1567-1640* (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 106 and 160.

[32]See especially Gordon, *The Renaissance Imagination*, pp. 141-156.

[33]Inigo Jones: note on p. 229 of his 1614 edition of Plutarch's *Moralia* (see *Annotations*, p.
40).

Echo Song (11 lines)

Speech (8 lines)

First Set Dance (Masquers)

Song (8 lines)

Second Set Dance (Masquers) - - - - - - - - - ◇ - - - - -[27 lines] - - - -

Song (7 lines)

Song (7 lines)

Song (6 lines)

Revels (Masquers + Court)

Song (6 lines)

Third Set Dance (Masquers) - - - - - - - - - - ◇ - - - - -[26 lines] - - - -

Speech (16 lines)

Fourth Set Dance (Masquers)

Echo Song (11 lines)

- -[27 lines] - - - -

Figure 1: *The Masque of Beautie* (1608)
Structure of the Masque Proper

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remembered that, on the one hand, the opening and closing songs are performed by musicians in the arbors and "iterated in the closes by two *Eccho's*, rising out of the Fountaines" of the emblematic island (*Workes*, p. 907) while, on the other hand, the final echo song reverts to the planetary theme:

> Still turne, and imitate the heauen
> In motion swift and euen;
> And as his Planets goe,
> Your brighter lights doe so. (*Workes*, p. 910)

The actual music for the two echo songs has not, unfortunately, survived; but the intermitting five songs appear in Ferrabosco's *Ayres* of 1609, and at last give us tangible evidence as to how the composer has been able to react to Jonson's numerological conceit. There is a sense, as was already apparent in the positioning of the transformation scene, that Jonson's text circumscribes the music so tightly that it only needs to be harmonic to fall in with his overarching idea; and the same applies to the extant pieces from the masque proper. Accordingly, the first of Ferrabosco's songs, an eight-line tenor piece, "So beautie on the waters stood,"[34] falls on its twentieth line (hence marking the proportion of 1 : 3, or a double octave), at the moment when the sixteen masquers—having completed a carefully prepared dance full of "curious *Squares*, and *Rounds*"—are pausing for breath on the dance floor, marshaled into "the figure of a *Diamant* " (*Workes*, p. 908):
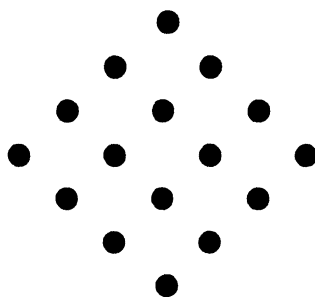
Ferrabosco has more finesse than to restrict himself to the basics—although, with perfect propriety for Jonson's linear placement, he chooses to sound an octave tonic in the C-major chord which begins the piece. Indeed, as Peter Walls has well observed, in its symmetry, its smoothness of melodic transitions, and its undisturbed harmonies, the setting is admirably suited to

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[34]Ferrabosco, *Ayres* (1609) no. 21, Sig. G.2.; Quoted from Chan, *Music in the Theatre of Ben Jonson*, pp. 160-162.

"the Neoplatonic outlook of the poem": melismatically miming the "*motion*" that the poet describes in the second half of the song, or jumping climactically to "the highest note in the piece (*g'*)," in a manner that closely and sympathetically engages with Jonson's syntax.[35]

More subtle, however, is the fact that the four opening lines of this song in praise of the motionless masquers are bisected by the square root of the entire two-hundred-line masque:

> So beautie on the waters stood,
> (When *loue* had seuer'd earth, from flood!
>
> [√2]
>
> So when he parted ayre, from fire,
> He did with concord all inspire! (*Workes*, p. 909)

Within the Pythagorean, Neoplatonic, and Hermetic traditions the square root of two—that irrational *enfant terrible* of the ancient number systems—was, as I have argued elsewhere, known as *alogos*. It was, literally, *not* a word and *not* a ratio; and accordingly, for the Pythagoreans it was ineffable in the double sense that it was *unutterable* as well as *not to be uttered*. In later masques, such as *Love Restored*, it appears that Jonson used this natural break in the number line as a logical place into which to insert the dances of the revels (which, by definition, step outside the temporal dimension of the masque into that of the court). Earlier, however, it may have been another resonance which caught his imagination. For in the *Poimandres* of Hermes Trismegistus—which Jonson owned in the London edition of 1611, with an introduction by Franciscus Patricius—one may read of the separation of the elements, followed by a startling creation myth that describes how the androgynous divine artificer, looking down through the spheres at its image reflected in the chaos of the earth amid the wordless (*alogos*) lower elements, desired to be there and so simultaneously (as a divine being) *was* there: taking on their qualities in the course of the descent and mingling with Nature in a mutual embrace of love. This is a text which seeks to explain why humankind (as an image of the divine) is twofold, mortal and immortal, above the world of the spheres yet a slave of destiny.[36]

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[35]Walls, *English Courtly Masque*, p. 64.

[36]For a more extended discussion of this topic in the masques, see Anthony Johnson, "Ben Jonson, the Golden Section, and √2 : 1," in *Carina Amicorum: Carin Davidsson septuagenariae*, ed. M. Björklund, H. Lundberg and J. Orlov (Åbo: Åbo Academy Press, 1990), pp. 137-152.

Reading from this myth into the *Masque of Beautie*, the *alogos* in that work would seem to represent that fragmentation of the primal *logos* and the divine self which created males and females as well as the birth of desire: an unspeakable moment of betweenness which lies at the center of the separation of the four elements. To pursue this train of thought would not seem in any way to vitiate Gordon's Ficinian reading of the masque. For it was, of course, Ficino who was the first Western translator of Hermes Trismegistus; and it was, in turn, Trismegistus who helped to give so much of that magical particularity to Ficino's Neoplatonic readings on the birth of beauty: readings which seem to have exerted a considerable influence on the development of Renaissance music theater.[37]

Returning to Ferrabosco—whose musicians in their arbors represent "the *Shades* of the olde *Poets*" and are dressed up like orphic priests in habits of "*Crimson*, and *Purple*, with *Laurell* gyrlonds" (*Workes*, p. 907)—it therefore begins to seem increasingly likely that he may have had at least some awareness of the finer points of such mysteries. But whether by design or not, Ferrabosco's practice seems to be wholly in accord with Jonson on this subject. For at the $\sqrt{2}$ node of the masque, after the words "*loue* had seuer'd earth, from flood," he places a half-note rest (i.e. a wordless, or ineffable, moment) in the tenor part over an instrumental tonic chord C major) in what may have been intended as a symbolically harmonious ninth measure of his song. If Ferrabosco's action is based on an understanding of this detail, and if the composer did engage fully with the imaginative possibilities derived from the contrary motions to be seen on the island where his singers were ensconced, it may not seem wholly coincidental that, read from the end of the twenty-nine-measure song back towards its origin, the square root of the piece falls across precisely the same point.

As the masque proper progresses towards its center, its allegory appears to become less arcane, most probably because Jonson is opening out the narrative to prepare the spectators for participation in the communal dancing which will occupy most of the evening. Where the transformation scene had presented the transcendence of present beauty, and where the change of tense signaled by the tenor's song had fixed on the past in order to consider the paradoxes implicit in the birth of beauty, the three songs preceding the revels may in practice be treated as a single twenty-line unit (*Workes*, p. 909), which raises, seconds, and answers a proposition about the masquing present (at the

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[37]On this, see especially D. P. Walker's classic study, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London: Warburg Institute, 1958).

same time as it gives the dancers a brief respite from their exertions).[38] The proposition, as Gordon has clarified, is based on the simple Neoplatonic idea that there are two sorts of Cupid: the earthly, sensual ones (who are blind), and those associated with a higher love (who are not).[39] Hence the first song, performed by a treble, imagines what would have happened if all the Cupids in the court (who of course are the planetary torchbearers from the throne of beauty) were of the "wanton" (l. 149) variety—Ferrabosco here sends a wave of fickleness through that word (mm. 4, beat 4 through 5, beat 2)—and wounded their own mothers (presumably the masquing beauties). The treble in the second song then responds at the same level by implying that it is only fair for male "*Loues*" (l. 158) to come armed to court, as they are likely to be surprised and wounded by the glances of the women upon their "hearts, here" (l. 160). And the tenor in the third song then steps forward to resolve everything and summon in the revels by pointing out that these loves and beauties are not of the sensuous kind and do not fight, but rather "strike a musique of like harts" (l. 167).

There is much room here for musical as well as textual playfulness, and it seems that the composer and poet (as well as, no doubt, the choreographers) availed themselves of the possibilities. The first song, for instance, as Walls observes, offers evidence of Ferrabosco's "fluid harmonies," modulating over the course of measures 3 to 6 in "a rapid movement" that traverses "four steps in the circle of fifths." Walls's comment, which refers to a moment towards the middle of this masque of whirling spheres, strikingly calls to mind Rosselli's *musica sferica* and suggests that, intentionally or not, Ferrabosco's very modulations could have been construed within the Renaissance imagination as being supportive of Jonson's conceit. Jonson, for his part, also appears to be having fun, as his verse forms cut back from the musically emblematic octosyllabics of "So beautie on the waters stood" into odd, light, admixtures of octosyllabics and heptasyllabics for the two treble songs.

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[38] These songs—"If all these Cupids," "It was no pollicie of court," and "Yes were the loues" —may be found respectively in Ferrabosco, *Ayres* (1609), no. 18, Sig. F. 2v, no. 19. Sig. G. 1, no. 20, sig. G. 1v; and in Chan, *Music in the Theatre of Ben Jonson*, pp. 165-167, 167-169, and 170-173.

[39] See Gordon, *The Renaissance Imagination*, pp. 144-145. In fact this doubling, especially when it is read in conjunction with the *Poimandres* or Ficino's commentary on Plato's *Symposium*, helps solve the apparent paradox of love being "elder than his birth" in the last line of the previous song: the younger love is the sensual one, born at the fragmentation of the *logos*, and longing to find completion.

Moreover, in the third song of the series he weighs down his description of false loves and beauties with heavy nine-syllable lines before reverting to a perfect octosyllabic closure—"But strike a musique of like hearts"—which is entirely in consonance with the true love and beauty that are his subject matter at this point. And here again it appears that the poet's ideas find a complement in Ferrabosco, as the composer reserves the highest note in his setting (the g ' in "strike", m. 34, beats 1-3), for the rhythmic climax of Jonson's text.[40]

In terms of the congruence between musical and textual tectonics one could, perhaps, go even further in this section, as Jonson's octosyllabic line, "Vpon the hearts, here, meane surprize" (l. 160), literally marks out the mathematical heart (or musical mean), of the masque proper: dividing it in the simple ratio of 2 : 1, i.e., an octave. (With respect to the entire masque, it also marks out the ratio of 4 : 5, that is, a major third.) But what is remarkable here is that Ferrabosco decides to match Jonson's harmonic punning with some of his own. He reverts on "hearts, here" (m. 19, beats 1-2) to the tonic chord of G (minor), and leaves a G in place while he shifts to a suspended dominant (literally a "mean") on "mean" (m. 19, beat 3). Having settled down onto a root-position D-minor chord for the first eighth-note of m. 19, beat 4, he then abruptly resolves upwards in the last eighth-note from an A in the treble via a B♮ on the first syllable of "surprize," moving through what could be interpreted as a first-inversion diminished triad to land on C major for the second syllable of the word (m. 20, beat 1), which promptly melts down to closure on an F-major chord (m. 20, beat 2).

The only other survival from the masque to be found in Ferrabosco's *Ayres* of 1609 is "Had those, that dwell in error foule."[41] This song—which begins on line 48 of the masque proper, thus marking its 3 : 5 division (i.e. the interval of a major sixth)—signals the moment at which, as Jonson makes plain, "*the musique appointed* " to celebrate the "*excellent graces*" of those dancing the revels "*shew'd it could be silent no longer: but by the first tenor, admir'd them ...*" (*Workes*, p. 909). The foul error which this harmonious moment refutes is the old patriarchal notion—pseudonymously traceable to Ambrose and topicalised by the Leipzig text *Mulieres Homines non esse* (1595)—that women had no souls. Jonson's response is that anyone seeing these dancers move would surely realize that "*Women were the soules of*

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[40]See Walls, *English Courtly Masque*, p. 60.

[41]See Ferrabosco, *Ayres* (1609), no. 22, Sig. G. 2; and Chan, *Music in the Theatre of Ben Jonson*, pp. 179-181.

men": stirring every heart and eye "With the *worlds soule*, true *harmony*" (*Workes*, p. 910). Jonson's note beside this passage refers the reader to the "*Platonicks*" as well as Books Two and Three of Macrobius's *Somnium Scipionis* for this resolution. Seen from the perspective of such a deeply numerological context it may well be more than coincidence that the song itself traverses the Golden Section of the masque proper (lines 49-50): at a point that falls between the proposition that women have no soul and its negation through his praise of their motion.

Ferrabosco here is as sensitive to Jonson's text as he has been elsewhere. He runs a little melismatic ripple through "error" (m. 3, beats 1-2)—as he had with "wanton" in "It was no pollicie of court"—and marks the words "moue" and "heart" in the climactic phrase of the song (mm. 18, beat 2 through 20, beat 1) with a *g'*. In light of the fact that "heart" is associated with a G everywhere in this masque—either, as here, in terms of pitch or elsewhere in a chordal relation: G minor in "It was no pollicie of court" (m. 19, beats 1-2), or G major in "Yes were the loues" (mm. 28 and 37)—one may even begin to speculate on whether Ferrabosco is using tonal emblemism at more profound levels. And in this respect it does seem remarkable that the Golden Section of the composer's twenty-five-measure setting of "Had those, that dwell in error foule" falls on the word "men" (m. 16): for since, like $\sqrt{2}$, the Golden Section is both masculine and feminine, and since the words here are pointing out that women are the souls of men, Jonson's text and Ferrabosco's setting seem powerfully aligned. One could even go further by noticing that, as with $\sqrt{2}$, the positioning of the same proportion taken in the other direction, i.e., from the end of the song towards its beginning, falls in m. 10. This is the same point at which Jonson's Golden Section falls, the exact textual moment being marked by a quarter-note rest in the tenor over a restatement of the tonic chord (m. 10 I). Although I would not wish to overstress Ferrabosco's deliberacy in all of this, it is clear from a number of other masques that Jonson seems to have been well aware of the proportion transected by the Golden Section—which is, of course, the perfect division of unity—and used it accordingly.[42] In this respect, it also seems appropriate to reflect that the Golden Section (ϕ) for the whole masque falls across the first echo song at a moment of transcendence:

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[42]I have discussed Jonson and the Golden Section in my forthcoming article (presented at the Conference on Cultural Functions of Interart Poetics and Practice held in Lund, May 2000), "Ben Jonson and *The Golden Age Restored* (1616): A Case Study in Cultural Functionality," to be published in the proceedings of the conference edited by Ulla-Britta Lagerroth.

When *Loue*, at first did mooue
From out of *Chaos*, brightned
So was the world, and lightned,
[φ]
As now! *Eccho*. As now! *Ecch*. As now!
                                 (*Workes*, pp. 907-908)

Here, by using the Golden Section to demolish the temporal difference
between the coming of light to the world and the "now" of the Whitehall
Banqueting House, Jonson appears to be making the present of the masquing
world a return to—or, rather, a restoration of—the Golden Age. In view of
Ferrabosco's treatment of the Golden Section of the masque proper, we can
only lament the lack of surviving music at this point in the entertainment.

After the song, "Had those, that dwell in error foule," the masque settles
into a fairly rapid closure with an elegant third set dance followed by a
valedictory speech of sixteen lines addressed to the King. The speech contains,
on line 60 of the masque proper, a reference to "*beauties* perfect *throne*"
(*Workes*, p. 909, l. 180), which marks the closing section at its 3 : 4 division
(i.e., a moment that enacts the harmony of a perfect fourth). So at last, after
a final dance ushering the masquers back onto the throne of beauty, the
masque resolves on an echo song. And in recollection, perhaps, of the em-
phasized present of the previous echo song, it ends by reminding the courtly
audience of James's Whitehall that the "*Elysian* fields are here" (*Workes*, p.
909, l. 200)

All in all, then, it seems from the evidence of Ferrabosco's surviving
music in the 1609 *Ayres*, that Jonson's text and Ferrabosco's settings support
one another at almost every turn (see Figure 2 below).

"Comparable to the Mass in structure, the masque was a
secular rite which conveyed its message through speech and
vocal music as well as elaborate costumes, lighting and scenic
effects."[43]

Who out of Jonson's, or Jones's, or Ferrabosco's audience could possibly be
expected to understand the sort of numerological subtlety that I have been

[43]Penelope Gouk, *Music, Science and Natural Magic in Seventeenth-Century England*
(New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 31.

Proportion of the Entire Masque   Proportion within the Masque Proper

Prelude (120 Lines)

3 : 2 ——————— [The Island of Beauty]

The Masque Proper (80 Lines)

                    ["So Beautie on the waters stood"] ——————— 3 : 1

                    ["So was the world, and lightned"

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — ϕ

                    As now! *Eccho.* As now! *Ecc.* As now!]

                    ["When *loue* had seuer'd earth, from flood!

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — $\sqrt{2}$

                    So when he parted ayre, from fire"]

5 : 4 ——————— ["Vpon the hearts, here, meane surprize"] ———— 2 : 1

                    ["Had those, that dwell in error foule"] ———— 5 : 3

                    ["And hold that women haue no soule,

           ϕ — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

                    But seene these moue; they would haue, then"]

                    ["Of their ambition, *beauties* perfect *throne*"] ———— 4 : 3

1 : 1 ——————— ["*Ecch. 'Elysian* fields are here"] ————————— 1 : 1

Figure 2: *The Masque of Beautie* (1608):
Significant Proportional Points in the Masque Proper

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examining in this paper? Or to put it another way: what would be the point of such a remarkable collaborative synergy, even if it were to be deliberate? An examination of the reception of the *Masque of Beautie* offers nothing in the way of conclusive evidence to this question, but it does at least afford a little room for informed speculation. Jonson was a Catholic in 1608 and so, Penelope Gouk reminds us, were the Ferraboscos. Anne of Denmark, who had commissioned the masque, was a Catholic. And proportionately speaking, with respect to the small amount of surviving manuscript material concerning the masque, there is a considerable emphasis on religion.[44]

Over the weeks leading up to the production of the *Masque of Beautie*, the French ambassador, Antoine Lefevre de la Boderie, for example, took a great interest in a softening of attitudes which he discerned towards the Roman religion, and remarked of the personnel for the coming event that "*presque toutes les Dames que la Reine a appellées pour en être sont Catholiques*" (almost all the ladies whom the Queen has summoned to participate in it are Catholics). As Herford and the Simpsons have noted, the recognizable Catholic participants in the masque constituted "the four daughters of the Earl of Worcester, Lady E. Guilford, Lady K. Petre, Lady A. Winter, [...] Lady Knollys" and also, possibly, the Countess of Arundel.[45] Furthermore, as Graham Parry has implied, it was precisely the aristocratic women, many of them highly important in terms of cultural patronage, who were the chief intellectual beneficiaries of the masques. For it was they who would have had the time during the extensive rehearsals to discuss the ideas of the collaborators, to gain at least some understanding of the complexities that underlay the entertainments, and, perhaps, to relish the rituals.[46]

Nor were, of course, the participants the whole of the matter. In 1609, a young Tuscan named Antimo Galli who, as John Orrell has convincingly argued, was probably in England as a secretary in the Catholic family headed by Gilbert Talbot, seventh Earl of Shrewsbury, published a poetic description of the occasion, naming the most important figures in the audience as well as

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[44]Gouk, *Music, Science and Natural Magic*, p. 29. For Anne's Catholicism, see A.J. Loomie, SJ, "King James I's Catholic Consort," *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 34 (1970-1971): 303-316. For aesthetic aspects of Jonson's Catholicism, see particularly Johnson, *Poetry and Architecture*, pp. 197-198, 223-225, and 239-241.

[45]La Boderie (*Ambassades*, ii. p. 490), cit. H&S X, p. 458. All quotations from H&S in the paragraph are from this page.

[46]See Graham Parry, The *Golden Age Restor'd: The Culture of the Stuart Court, 1603-1642* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), pp. 47, 175, and 165-183 *passim*.

the masquers. The former included the Spanish and Venetian ambassadors; Galli's friend Ottaviano Lotti; the Earl of Worcester and Frances Howard ("FRANCESCA Aword," see stanza 96), who was herself, as David Lindley has pointed out, "suspected of Catholic leanings."[47] In his vision of the masque itself Galli does not, moreover, stint in the religiosity of his language. For although he conceptualizes Anne of Denmark as a celestial figure beyond the planets in their orbits, he also describes her appearance as angelic (*"D'Angeli sembianti,"* see stanza 13). Indeed, to Galli's narrator (who is none other than Cupid without a blindfold), the moment of arrival in the Banqueting Hall (stanza 12) offers nothing less than a moment of quasi-mystical rhapsody at the loving faces (*"Amorosi sembianti"*), the pilgrims (*"pellegrini"*), and the "divine angelic choirs" (*"cori Angelici, e Divini,"*), which greet his eyes and ears.[48] The fruitful ambiguity of his Christianized Platonism is available for all to see.

If—as the epigraph to the present section suggests—the masque, with its Orphic musicians in priestly raiments, its complex rites, and its hymns to divinity could be viewed as a sort of secular surrogate to the Mass, then its numerological subtleties may also be viewed as religious in impulse. And in part, at least, it may well be that the esotericism of the subject matter helped to deflect the brazenness of its Catholicism, rendering it an object of great beauty. In this respect, it could be likened to the plaque of the Annunciation given to Anne on April 11, 1609 which, as Peter Davidson and Thomas M. McCoog, SJ, have pointed out in an important recent reassessment of her religious position, is "theoretically tolerable in a Protestant context," yet simultaneously "is also clearly open to interpretation as essentially Catholic."[49] Through the synergetic use of textual, visual, and musical forces, the masque, then, becomes a vessel—to use one of Jonson's favorite images—in which to gather the benignity of the divine. As such it acted, as we

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[47]David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London and New York, Routledge, 1993; rpt. 1996), p. 165. For Galli, see John Orrell, "Antimo Galli's Description of *The Masque of Beauty,*" *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 43 (1979): 13-23. All quotations and English translations from Galli's work in the present paragraph have been taken from this article. Galli's book is entitled, *Rime di Antimo Galli all'illustrissima Signora Elizabetta Talbot-Grey* (London, 1609).

[48]Quoted from Orrell, "Antimo Galli's Description of *The Masque of Beauty,*" pp. 18-19.

[49]See Peter Davidson and Thomas M. McCoog, SJ, "Father Robert's Convert: The Private Catholicism of Anne of Denmark," *Times Literary Supplement,* no. 5095 (November 24, 2000), pp. 16-17.

now know that a number of early operas did, as a center attractive for the secular celebration of religious experience.[50] And if this is so, then there is really no point in further questioning the reasoning behind its hermeneutic intricacy. For as the entire tradition of mystical numerology teaches us, there can be no overplus of subtlety, no redundancy of detail, when a work is consecrated (implicitly or explicitly) to God.

[50]For a powerful discussion of the continuation of this tradition in the reign of Charles I (whose wife, Henrietta Maria de Medici, unashamedly fostered her own Catholic cultural inheritance in the English Court), see Erica Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion: Queen Henrietta Maria and Court Entertainments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

The Truth Ineffably Divine: The Loss and Recovery of the Sacred in Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*

Robert A. Davis

> *Loud WAGNER, put it on the stage:*
> *the mental hero who has swooned*
> *with sensual pleasure at his wound,*
> *his intellectual life fulfilled*
> *in knowing that his doom is willed,*
> *exists to suffer; borne along*
> *upon a timeless tide of song,*
> *the huge doll roars for death or mother,*
> *synonymous with one another;*
> *and Woman, passive as in dreams,*
> *redeems, redeems, redeems, redeems.*[1]

The concept of the sacred has lost much of its historic prestige in the discourses of modernity. In part a consequence of the process of secularization, in part an effect of the rationalist assault on the truth claims of religious language and religious experience, the sacred has fallen prey to the skeptical suspicions of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment hermeneutics and their polemical attempt to break the once revered covenant between Word and world. Provocatively for the present essay, George Steiner sees the consequences which result from this fracture becoming strategically most explicit in the decades following 1870. In the emergent forms and manifesto pronouncements of modernism, he argues, there is signaled "one of the very few genuine revolutions of spirit in Western history," marking the abandonment of the transcendental idealism on which authentication of ancient categories such as the sacred had previously depended.[2]

To the adversarial temper of contemporary theory—perhaps to be seen as modernism's most aggressive critical mutation—the sacred is a site of still more radical conflict. Read symptomatically, the sacred exposes the

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[1]W. H. Auden, "New Year Letter," *Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), p. 188.

[2]George Steiner, *Real Presences* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), p. 93.

falsifications of the whole logocentric order in Western thought and the essentialist assumptions on which idealist culture rests: the privileging of a coherent human subjectivity; the belief that reality is a stable field of objects accessible to reason and corresponding to spiritual truths only partially encompassed by language; the insistence on a stable system of signification conferring meaning and identity on human communities by its participation in a non-material hierarchy of presence. The sacred is here interpreted not simply as an illusion but as a scandal: a betrayal and chastisement of the body through the deadly dualism of flesh and spirit, the body's appetites punished and denied for their disclosure of our untranscended complicity in the differential flow of nature.[3]

The visibly Nietzschean roots of the post-structuralist critique of the sacred outlined above provide an obvious link to the realms of Wagnerian opera. They connect also with the place of those operas in the troubled histories of the sacred in modern art, and the operas' ambivalent influence on Nietzsche's own anti-aesthetics.[4] Georges Bataille—another tormented Wagnerian— perhaps understood most fully the implications of Nietzsche's celebration of the flux of matter and sensation in which the human subject is perpetually immersed—the continuum that, Nietzsche insisted, traditional religion exists either to assuage or deny[5]. Like Nietzsche, Bataille argues that Western culture represses materiality and heterogeneity in favor of a homogeneous stasis based on entranced uniformity and human servility before the demands of reified and spiritualized truths. Societies pressurize their subjects to project onto the world closed systems of thought and morality, such as the doctrines of organized religion, and use these to expel everything that discloses the human link to materiality, such as sexuality and death. Paradoxically, Bataille problematizes the argument taken up by his successors in contemporary theory in suggesting that through the recalcitrant structures of religious discipline the experience of "the sacred" survives interstitially as a grounding metaphor for our attempt to reconnect with the material totality of nature. The commerce with the natural is for Bataille a displaced eroticism, and the numinous "charge" or semiotic *chora* which attaches itself to apprehensions

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[3]For an excellent summary of the argument see Jonathan Dollimore, *Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture* (London: Allen Lane, 1998), pp. 43-59.

[4]See Byron Nelson, "Wagner, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche: On the Value of Human Action," *Opera Quarterly* 6 (1989): 30-31.

[5]Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), pp. 61-63.

of the sacred in religious rite and symbol derives its energy from the unlooked-for return of repressed bodily desires. Ideologically remodeled by theological intervention, these desires nonetheless communicate with "the primal continuity linking us with everything that is."[6] Although it may be manipulated by the theological regimes of traditional religion ultimately to subordinate and dissolve the claims of the body, in its sensory intoxication the sacred culminates in an emblazoning of the body. It succeeds in reasserting the irrepressible primacy of being and overcomes the religious terrors of isolated selfhood by demanding "the greatest possible loss" of ego.[7] This loss is not, of course, the apophatic surrender of traditional Western metaphysics, but its opposite: the dissolution of abstract selfhood into the body and its decompositional energies.

What is missing in contemporary theory's partial attachment to Bataille's revisionist account of the sacred is recognition of the fundamental interaction, the underlying morphological unity, of sacred and profane. According to Mircea Eliade, it is precisely this reciprocity which accounts for the "ambivalence by which the sacred at once attracts and repels."[8] No stripping away of its cleverly disguised division of flesh and spirit, libidinal body and transcendent revelation, is in fact required because the sacred has always already foregrounded its own modalities, its own immanence in material substances and processes. Indeed, as we shall see, in some theologies it collapses all separations into a unitary affirmation of redeemed matter. Nowhere more spectacularly than in Romantic art—in even its most institutionally disruptive expressions—the pursuit of visionary experiences approximating the condition of the sacred is plotted through the intractable awareness of the embodied self. Similarly, in even the most Manichaean of dualisms, the moment of hierophany relies upon its locus in the material to guarantee that the manifestation of power will induce the indicative physical sensations of fear and veneration in observer and participants. "We must get used to the idea of recognizing hierophanies absolutely everywhere," notes Eliade,

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[6]Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1986), p. 21.

[7]Bataille, *Erotism*, p. 24.

[8]Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (London and Sydney: Sheed and Ward, 1958), p. 17.

> in every area of psychological, economic, spiritual and social life.
> [...] This list could be carried on to include man's everyday
> movements [...] his various employments [...] all his
> physiological activities (nutrition, sexual life etc.); perhaps too
> the essential words of the language, and so on.[9]

Wagner's *Parsifal* can be said to take up into its own idealized Romantic
aesthetic just this ambiguous relation of materiality both surpassed and
retained on which the sacred has always turned. In this sense, *Parsifal* is a
composition made sacred not by its external trappings, invocatory though
these are, nor by its context of reception as a "Stage Dedication Festival
Play,"[10] but by its peculiarly modern dramatization of the discursive tensions
through which the sacred is mediated and rehabilitated in post-Christian art.
This claim does not exonerate the work from all of the accusations laid
against it by contemporary theory, but it does suggest that many of these are
anticipated and internalized by the gaps and discontinuities in the opera itself.
It also points diagnostically to the incomplete grasp of the symbolic theology
of the body by which much current critical practice is impeded and which
compels it always to read the sacred pejoratively as code for a profane
"something else." In the generalizations of conventional musical historio-
graphy, opera is thematized as the profane musical form *par excellence*, a
genre that from its point of origin defines the suffering individual in expressly
secular terms, identity bounded by sensual experience and social regulation,
and fate driven by the conflict between these.[11] It is the musical genre that in
its form and content most firmly eschews the consolations of the transcendent
and the idioms of religious submission. It is, in short, the classic expression
of a secular artistic sensibility and the cultural production of a society steadily
loosening its ties to a religious world view. One aspect of Wagner's effrontery
in *Parsifal* is his reintroduction into the secular space of the opera house of
many of the key features of sacred musical experience. Mediated through the
cherished imagery of Romantic mythology, and pushing at the frontiers of
harmonic and theatrical design, the allegedly sacred elements are by these
measures exempted from charges of anachronism and nostalgia, though they
are by no means then unconditionally welcomed. From Nietzsche onwards,

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[9]Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, p. 12.

[10]Richard Wagner, *Parsifal : Opera Guide 34*, trans. Andrew Porter (London: John Calder),
p. 83. This is the translation of Wagner's 'poem' used throughout this essay.

[11]Peter Conrad, *A Song of Love and Death: The Meaning of Opera* (London: Hogarth, 1989).

commentators ranging from the skeptical to the enthusiastic have registered uneasily the undeniably religious nimbus which surrounds *Parsifal*, the aura of import traditionally reserved for objects or performances caught immemorially in the nexus between community and power. A perverse example of this is to be found in the many occult interpretations of the opera which sprang up in the years immediately after its first productions.[12] Allegorizing readings were one means of containing the work within a traditional conceptual framework without valorizing its quasi-religious impulses in anything other than an esoteric or talismanic sense.

From its opening scenes onwards, *Parsifal* trades in a ceremonial symbolism redolent of the medieval Christian liturgy and ritual once again fashionable at the time of its composition, especially the ancient paraliturgies of the great cathedrals.[13] Litany, prayer, processional progression, sacral gesture and action, holy objects, choral responseries and, above all, sacramental formulae accord the opera's characters and setting the static formalism associated visually with a Book of Hours and aurally with a Benediction. "Here Time is one with Space," Gurnemanz admonishes Parsifal at the end of Scene 1.[14] The presentation of these "retro" features is accompanied by a hieratic intensification of the musical meaning, communicated most explicitly in the structure of leitmotivic sequences and recapitulations such as the Dresden Amen. The resultant effect is of the kind usually reserved for ecclesiastical spectacles or high feast-day events in which the dialectic of remoteness and proximity is the condition not of appreciation but of belief. Lacoue-Labarthe defines this motivating aspect of late Wagnerian music-drama as a "mediation of the group, a 'solemnity', a frisson" which conceals the process of production by effacing all the trappings of mimetic art and substituting for them "something like a voiceless terror. Unease more than emotion. And the sacred [...] resides in this secret."[15] Artifice and critical judgment are sublimated in a participation mystique that prohibits interrogation using the unspoken dogmatic force of religious law. Wagner himself recognized this affinity between the aesthetic design of his theater and the

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[12]See William Blissett, "The Liturgy of Parsifal," *Toronto University Quarterly* 49.2 (1979/80), p. 119.

[13]Discussed in Dieter Borchmeyer, *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theatre* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 383.

[14]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 96.

[15]Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Musica Ficta: Figures of Wagner* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 48.

primordial patterns of religious belief, but his conception of the sacred was not embarrassed by them. It was on the contrary powerfully mobilized by a creative logic that took sustenance from the recovery by symbolic form of all that seemed, at least temporarily, to have been lost to the practice of faith:

> [...] where Religion becomes artificial, it is reserved for Art to save the spirit of Religion by recognizing the figurative value of the mythic symbols which the former would have us believe in their literal sense, and revealing their deep and hidden truth through an ideal [...] presentation.[16]

In a remarkably prescient anticipation of the theological aesthetics and comparative religion of the 20th century, Wagner argues that Art and Religion enter into a contract where the deficiencies of one in any historical epoch are compensated by the achievements of the other, affording humanity "apprehension of its inner kernel, the truth ineffably divine."[17] As his explorations of Buddhist soteriology and Schopenhauerean ethics serve to demonstrate, this relationship between religion and art is for Wagner no simple historical succession. The assumption of sacred responsibilities by the secular forms of art must avoid an overdetermined confessionalism menacing to the integrity of both realities. "[I]t is permissible for art to use these symbols," Wagner told Cosima in another insightful foreshadowing of contemporary theories of ludic action, "but in a free spirit [... S]ince art is a profound form of *play*, it frees these symbols of all the accretions the human craving for *power* has attached to them."[18] Parsifal, the Innocent Fool who must be brought to remember his own childhood, may be said to be the chief representative of the destabilizing yet healing properties of play. His sacred commission is part of an elaborated game that evacuates the thematics of power from a ritual made decadent by its otherwise purposeless addiction to power. Understood in this genuinely Wagnerian—and indeed Nietzschean— fashion, rather than simply pathologized by theory, the opera dramatizes a crisis in the theology of play (perhaps also the Buddhist *lila* or cosmic play): a draining away of meaning from a central rite which craves the restoration that only innocence can bring. Parsifal's task therefore goes beyond mere imitation. His innocence must

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[16]Richard Wagner, "Religion and Art," in William Ashton Ellis (trans.), *Richard Wagner's Prose Works Vol VI: Religion and Art* (New York: Broude Brothers, 1897), p. 213.

[17]Wagner, "Religion and Art," p. 213.

[18]Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack, ed., *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Volume II 1878-1883*, trans. Geoffrey Skelton (London: Collins, 1980), p. 470. My italics.

engage subversively with the ossified processes of power to expose the illusions upon which its circumscription of human freedom rests. Dispelling the fabrications of Klingsor's garden and counter-acting his misuse of the Spear reveal the factitiousness of both male aggression and instrumental female eroticism, showing that each is a construction of the exhausted symbolic order of the unachieved Grail. This in turn may point to the true meaning of the Romantic ethic of compassion that lies at the heart of *Parsifal*, and the prophecy of "The blameless fool made wise through pity."[19] The making of wisdom and the attainment of pity are the performance of Parsifal's *agon*, an *agon* in which the playfulness of art engages with the power of defunct religion in order not to replace it, but to free it from its own introspection and restore the sacred potency of its original symbolic order.[20]

Parsifal's misunderstanding in Act 1 of the meaning and nature of the wound represents the opera's first staging of the confrontation between power and play, and illustrates Wagner's refusal of the merely celebratory mode he had once contemplated in his abandoned Buddhist opera *The Victors*. Parsifal's initial incomprehension before Amfortas's wound is a consequence of the disorientating profanity of the wound's disclosure in the midst of a ritual event dominated, until that juncture in the narrative, by the steady intensification of mystic solemnity and reverence. The portrayal of the episode, however, succeeds in forestalling the accusation that the sudden shift of register reinstates a conventional supernatural dualism of spiritual and corporeal. From the outset the tragic interdependence of both categories is underlined.

> Oh!
> May no one know the burning pain
> caused by the holy sight that gives you delight!
> What is the Spear-wound, all its raging smart,
> compared to the pain, the agony
> of being condemned to serve this task!...
> Chastisement! Merciless chastisement
> from, ah! The offended God of mercy!...
> For Him my soul is burning...[21]

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[19]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 96.

[20]For a recent discussion of the Dionysian dynamic lying behind conventional understanding of play see Catherine Bates, *Play in a Godless World: The Theory and Practice of Play in Shakespeare, Nietzsche and Freud* (London: Open Gate Press, 1999).

[21]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 98.

Amfortas's obscene suffering disturbs and vitiates the mysteries of the Grail, but it also in a strange sense constitutes them. His outbursts become steadily assimilated into an almost stichomythic musical exchange with the triple injunctions of his father Titurel. Titurel's increasingly urgent pleas for his son to perform his Keeper's office meet eventually with the tormented cry of "Sorrow! Oh, eternal grief!/...No! Leave it unrevealed!"[22]; a refusal of the task which is so relentlessly subject to the power of the ritual that it swiftly becomes not a postponement of the sacred action but another phase within it. The irruption of the profane into the liturgical discourse of the Grail rite is thus seen to be one of its central signifying conditions. The body, particularly the body damaged or in distress, underpins sacred utterance. It demands a hearing because it is in fact the repressed subject of the mysteries unfolding all around it. Once again, the sacred and the profane are seen to be twin inflections of a single undifferentiated reality. This explains why the suffering of Amfortas is musically and imagistically interwoven into the scene's allusions to the Passion of Christ, the first implicit references to the Christian narrative that occur in the opera. These are destined to remain understated, but from their transparency and cumulative force they quickly assume the qualities of a validating matrix from which the opera's themes and actions derive their sacred resonance: "For sins of the world/with thousand sorrows/ His sacred blood He offered."[23] For all of their periphrasis, the references to Christ's Passion in Act 1 point immediately to the full unexpected shock of the Incarnation and its seemingly impious confusion of human and divine. Amfortas is overwhelmed by this collapse of separation and distinction, which brings the realm of the sacred, in the earlier scenes accessed through the conventional disciplines of holy contemplation, crashing through the pain of the suffering body. The vision of Christ crucified is the first and most telling reproach to the inadequacies of the unachieved Grail. It fortifies Amfortas's sense of guilt, because that guilt stems from the Grail fraternity's mistaken belief that the body and all it has come to signify stand as obstacles to the plenitude of sacred truth:

> ...the fount of that holy blood,
> I feel it flowing in my heart:
> The furious surge of my own guilty blood,
> my vile blood now defiled

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[22]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 96.

[23]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 97.

by shame, recoils before it;
to the world of sin and lust
how wildly now it is gushing.
The wound has opened again
my blood now is streaming forth,
here, through the spear-wound,
a wound like His...[24]

Post-structuralist critiques of the wound share with older celebrated analyses such as that of Denis de Rougemont an incomplete understanding of how the "split subjectivity" declaimed by the wound of Amfortas is rooted in a failed theology, one that *Parsifal* first exposes then endeavors to repair.[25] The divided self, which the wound successively expresses and punishes, has its local narrative origins in the disastrous encounter between Amfortas, Kundry, and Klingsor. The music in Amfortas's monologue in Act 1 conveys this history brilliantly in the entangling in his vocal line of the motifs associated with Klingsor and the Spear. They struggle with the steadily occluded Grail motif and the chords reiterating the Passion of Jesus for control of the Grail Keeper's utterance. The subsequent slippage in Amfortas's lament between the blood of his wound and the blood of Christ is the ironic crux of his self-division and of the delusions of the unfulfilled Grail. Where there ought to be pious identification between worshiping victim and the tableau of suffering Savior naked and bloody, there is instead only protest and despair: "my fevered sinful blood flows forth,/ever renewed by the tide of yearning/ that, ah! no repentance ever stills!"[26] Neither Amfortas nor the mute and bewildered Parsifal observing his torment can yet comprehend the miraculous message of the wound: that the blood-tie unites Amfortas to the crucified victim he contemplates, echoing the astonishing insight highlighted in the proposition of René Girard that "the operations of violence and the sacred are ultimately the same process."[27] It is for Parsifal later in the opera, illuminated by his manifold renunciations, to come to the realization that

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[24]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 98.

[25]See especially the very strong reading – with which the present essay does not finally concur – offered in Sandra Corse, "*Parsifal*: Wagner, Nietzsche, and the Modern Subject," *Theatre Journal* 46/1 (1993): 95-111; see especially 102. Denis de Rougemont, *Passion and Society*, trans. M. Belgion (London: Faber, 1956), pp. 217, 230-231.

[26]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 98.

[27]René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP), p. 258.

demystifies the theme of divine punishment. In so doing he will restore the desecrated body to its originary status as the radiant and sacred object affirmed in the purified erotics of play, to be no longer split and wounded by its subjection to the calculus of power.[28]

The achievement of the Grail may be its abolition. In Arthurian romance, to accomplish the quest of Grail and Lance was to effect the removal of these objects and their sacred influence from the world. It was therefore an essentially tragic undertaking.[29] Wagner's version of this tragedy has a more ironically modern, post-religious turn to it because it depicts in the unachieved Grail and its accompanying raptures the principal obstacles to the inflow of sacred feeling and the renovation of human relationships promised by the medieval quest. This may seem at first a counter-intuitive observation, for the Grail ritual is the centerpiece of the opera's devotionalism, and its restoration to pristine purity the hero's overriding goal. Parsifal and the Grail share the diatonic musical language that contrasts with the rich chromaticism of Amfortas, Klingsor, and Kundry. From the outset, however, there is in Wagner's artistry something idolatrous and diseased about the unachieved Grail and the craving it commands. "Reveal now the Grail!"[30] is the repeated ordinance, accentuating the spiritual feeding frenzy of the worshiping knights. Another hallowed object that ought to affirm the incarnational wholeness of redeemed Creation has been, like the wound of Amfortas, fetishized to the point where it means precisely the opposite, a sundering and separation of subject and object, a void filled vainly by repetition and increasingly desperate rhetoric entirely disconnected from the metaphysics it strives so uselessly to invoke.

At stake in this phase of *Parsifal* is not merely a contest between rival modes of signification, but rather the notion of a transcendental signified itself: a truth or meaning that stands outside of signification in an ideal ideational realm. In order for the values and oppositional hierarchies of the Grail universe to exist, a prior fundamental distinction must be operative and maintained, one that validates all the others. The binary divisions of the opera

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[28]For a much less optimistic account of the trials to which Wagner subjects the human body see Slavo Zizek, " 'The Wound is Healed Only by the Spear that Smote You'," in *Opera Through Other Eyes*, ed. David J. Levin (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 187-199.

[29]M. Victoria Guerin, *The Fall of Kings and Princes: Structure and Destruction in Arthurian Tragedy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

[30]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 97.

are abundant: Grail and Spear, swan and dove, Amfortas and Klingsor, Montsalvat and Klingsor's Castle, wound and castration, reality and illusion, wisdom and foolishness, pity and remorse, etc. What appears to generate and sustain these pairings is the originating and suppressed dialectic of sacred and profane, itself a mistake and a deception that the botched ritual of the Grail perpetuates. The issue is not only a particular relationship between truth and signification that the Grail ritual strives hopelessly to safeguard, but also more perilously the power of signs to make realities, to conjure into being things that do not exist apart from the gesture of signification that the ritual enacts. Without a transcendental signified that underwrites a differentiation between ideal and material, spirit and matter, truth and sign, inside and outside—all of the orders of law that kept things apart in discrete identities and hierarchical arrangements of virtue and vice—everything becomes mixed and all sorts of hitherto forbidden juxtapositions are possible (most notably, as we shall see, that between Parsifal and Kundry). Fathers fail to die, sons can be seduced by their mothers, fools become wise men. "No pathway to the Grail doth lead,/ and none can venture to approach it," Gurnemanz warns Parsifal, "unless the Grail itself has called him."[31] The language of power legitimates its credentials simply by an endless restatement of them, hedged about by a pseudo-religious series of mandates and taboos.

The malaise that afflicts the Grail ritual is identical with Amfortas's failure of vision, his enthralment to a defeatist dualism that no amount of ritual action can abridge. All the apparently signifying matter of the ceremonies of the unachieved Grail is merely a repetition, a substitution, and an *imitation in relation to truth*. It is reinforced by constraining conventions, articulations between parts, and citation of formulae, all of which deprive it of the presence they pretend to adumbrate. That which is articulate and conventional, as Friedrich Kittler has observed of Wagner's "media technology,"[32] is a technique, an external contrivance. What is produced is a pause and a deferral that does no more than simulate the *mysterium tremendum* it claims to house. Strive as it will to eradicate the qualities that menace it, the ritual confirms that its ideals are permanently contaminated and compromised by what it seeks to expel. Especially in a ceremony that so starkly confronts feeding and orality, and which is overshadowed by bleeding bodies, the sacred

[31]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 96.

[32]Friedrich Kittler, "World-Breath: On Wagner's Media Technology," in Levin, *Opera Through Other Eyes*, pp. 221.

cannot shed the profane, in fact is shown in a deep way *to be* the profane, and truth never lets go of signification. In fact it *is* signification.

Using Kierkegaard's *Repetition: A Venture in Experimenting Psychology* as his vehicle, the critic William Spanos has recently highlighted the irreducibly religious character of repetition, insensitivity to which diminishes postmodern thought. Spanos defines repetition as "a circularity that repeats the same to disclose, retrieve, deepen and extend the sociopolitical implications of the unnameable Ontological Difference repressed or concealed by the sedimented archival representations of being."[33] Religious representation of the kind abortively attempted in the Grail ceremony inevitably becomes narcissistic, occluding the divine epiphany it purports to manifest. Repeating this procedure, however, incrementally exposes not *what* is hidden, but that something *is* hidden. Accepting that the hidden object is sacred becomes then, in Kierkegaard's terms, an act of radical choice, and it may be that the gift Parsifal's innocence restores to the Grail ceremony and its acolytes is precisely the freedom of radical choice.[34]

Many critics have pointed out that Parsifal shares with other Wagnerian heroes a characteristic ignorance.[35] This is conveyed in his uncertain grasp of his own origins, his slaying of the swan, his incomprehension before the Grail, and his general artlessness in the opening scenes. The moral imperatives of the opera demand a more active kind of innocence, however, if the crisis of signification dramatized by the disordered Grail ritual is to be resolved. The mimetic desire that traps the Grail celebrants in a neurotic discourse of repetition and empty performativity derives from the punishing memories of what the Grail once was, the unitary realization of sacred and profane it represented prior to Amfortas's sin. Amfortas himself is locked into an endless reprise of his anguish and the error that occasioned it. Titurel is maintained in a gothically unnatural parody of life by his obsessive memories of the Grail's former efficacy and his demand that its service be performed. Gurnemanz, custodian of the fraternity's sacred stories, is a prisoner of his own memorializing function, charged each morning with rousing the knights and repeating to them the narrative exposition of their past glory and present

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[33]William Spanos, *Repetitions: The Postmodern Occasion in Literature and Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), p. 4.

[34]Siren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling / Repetition*, trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

[35]See, e.g., Carl Dahlhaus, *Richard Wagner's Music Dramas*, trans. Mary Whittall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

disarray. So all who pass into Montsalvat's sphere of influence are made accomplice to its tragedy, written into the Grail story and immediately assigned roles that paralyze freedom of choice and disable individual volition: "You know that here no other/save the pure in heart, as brother may enter;/to those who work the will of Heaven/the Grail's most wondrous might is given."[36] Kundry is, of course, the ultimate casualty of memory, burdened with the recollections of many lives and with an immortality that renders all acts of remembering a curse. Of all the characters constellated around the drama of the Grail before the arrival of Parsifal, only Klingsor has striven to escape the past and determine a future liberated from the responsibilities of memory. Only Klingsor looks forward into a possible future in anything other than the mythically circumscribed terms of prophecy. His self-castration represents a satanic kind of self-authoring anathema to the doctrines of the Grail, and because he tries like Amfortas to fight power with power he is made outcast, one of the profane objects by which the Grail reinforces its artificial sacerdotalism. Klingsor's ambition, however, is never endorsed by the moral pattern of the opera because it is founded on lack. He knows himself to be "…derided now,/because once to be holy I strove."[37] The language he uses to describe himself is peppered with outbursts against "scorn and contempt," "spurning," and rejection. The state of vindictive vengefulness into which he has fallen also necessarily exhibits a crippled attitude towards the past and all that it has denied him. Despite his future orientation, Klingsor is another victim enslaved by his editorializing memory. He is the only major character in the opera with whom Parsifal enters into open conflict, but Parsifal's defeat of him, unlike his overthrow of Ferris and the other evil knights, requires only that he "vanquish" Klingsor's "enchantments."[38] It is in refusing to be any part of the Grail's corrupted memory-system, good or evil, that Parsifal discovers the means paradoxically to achieve it.

The restoration that the innocent fool brings to the Grail fraternity, cutting through the tissue of phantoms its repetitious actions and recriminations have built up, is in consequence steeped in forgetting.[39] But it is forgetting

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[36]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 94.

[37]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 102.

[38]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 104.

[39]Corse also briefly discusses Parsifal's forgetting, but as part of an argument that stresses the desacralizing, secularizing aspects of his task as she sees it. My own interpretation is the reverse of this. See Corse, *"Parsifal*: Wagner, Nietzsche, and the Modern Subject": 105.

presented as a creative act rather than as mere amnesia towards what has gone before. Parsifal shows the other characters that only by relinquishing memory can they put down the burden of the past, part with illusions, and break the cycle of representation. The release from the past ends the capacity of the unachieved Grail to terrorize its followers, and brings an end to the self-destructive hegemony of its dysfunctional version of the sacred. Parsifal's immunity from the coercion of the Grail enables him to bring the sleep and rest for which the other characters yearn: equanimity for Gurnemanz, healing for Amfortas, rest and death for Kundry, even dissolution for Klingsor.

The contrary logic of forgetting is a vital component of Parsifal's innocence. It belongs with a broader pattern of inversion and thwarted expectations through which the opera effects its recovery of the sacred. The experience of the sacred is as a result replenished and has restored to it the necessary integration of the material and the spiritual for which Wagner believed post-Christian culture hungers. Such a synthesis is, of course, itself highly recuperative and suggestive, for it draws the opera back to the primordial language of sign and sacrament that so many commentators on Wagner, past and present, have found regressively repellent in a work of modern art. Notoriously, the rites of the Holy Grail in *Parsifal* disperse the act of consecration and the words of transubstantiation across two choruses, and the theatrical presentation of the priestly function is studiously avoided. Neither Amfortas in Act 1 nor Parsifal in Act 3 assume the role of priest. The multiple associations of eating and drinking, and the elements of Holy Communion, are nevertheless accorded a concentrated prominence on stage that sets off a troubling chain of intertextual signification across a range of inherited symbolic correspondences.

> Wine and bread of that Last Supper
> changed by Him, the Lord of mercy...
> Blood and body, gift of Heaven
> changed today for your salvation
> in our sacred Feast of Love,
> to the wine filling your cup
> to the bread that now you eat.[40]

Despite the absence of a minister, the citation of the words of institution, " 'take my body and eat,/as a remembrance of me'," remains a startlingly transparent entreaty to the Eucharist, that ultimate disclosure of divine

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[40]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 99.

presence in mundane things. It is, in the words of Paul Ricœur, a "metaphorical utterance [...] in which the logical distance between far-flung semantic fields suddenly falls away, creating a semantic shock which, in turn, sparks off the meaning of the metaphor."[41] Invocation of the mystical sign of the Real Presence takes us to the heart of the opera's most deep-seated and troubling appeal to memory: New Testament *anamnesis*, the "'recalling' or 'representing' of an event in the past *so that it becomes here and now operative by its effects*."[42] Even at the point where sacramental remembering ought to heal the breach in signification, however, and make plain the humanizing purpose of the Grail, its alienated character is again reasserted. The communion for which the fraternity thirsts is a militaristic parody of the peace that the Lord's Table is intended to convey. At their consumption of the bread and wine the knights pray for "manly strength and valour,/brave unto death"; for "fiery blood.../...to fight on with courage unfailing."[43] The solidarity they embody distorts the *anamnesis* of the mystical body of the Eucharist, in the name of an incorporation that is closer to the violence of mimetic appropriation which Girard sees depicted everywhere in ritual and myth—except, uniquely, in the cycle-breaking renunciations of Jesus and his Gospel of peace. "Violence is the subject of every mythical and cultural structure," argues Girard. "Christ is the only subject that has escaped that structure in order to free us from its grasp."[44] The fraudulent religiosity of the Grail knights, with its scriptural masquerade, cannot disguise their imprisonment in the curse of memory. Parsifal's erasure of incapacitating memories does not therefore contradict or misrepresent the theology of the Eucharist, it retrieves it from the Grail's claustrophobic embrace.

The unachieved Grail's isolation and distance from the truths to which it appears to be so agonizingly close throughout the opera is not in the final analysis surprising. There is throughout the genealogy of the Grail legends upon which Wagner drew a strong if never quite explicit suggestion of heresy. Reworkers of the Grail narratives, from Wolfram and Chrétien to Wagnerian anthropologists such as Jessie Weston have been tantalized by this strain in

[41]Paul Ricœur, "Imagination in Discourse and in Action," *Analecta Husserliana* 8, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymienieka (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1978): 7.

[42]Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre Press, 1945), p. 151. Italics in text.

[43]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 100.

[44]René Girard, *Des Choses cachées depuis la foundation du monde* (Paris: Livre de poche, 1983), p. 319. I am grateful to the late Charles Davis for the translation.

Grail romance, though never able fully to articulate its nature and function.[45] In essence the heretical emphasis in Grail literature seems to point towards a secret, a heterodox disclosure that is, like all such hierophanies, permanently deferred and disguised. It is presented fragmentarily, incompletely, in hints and enigmas, partial visions and veiled testimonies. At its most decadent, this produces mere word-magic and hermeticism, an abstruse iconography of dynamic motifs signaling the possibility of privileged intercourse between human and celestial forces. In its deepest intuitions, however, it may be read as an aberrant reaction to the problem of original signification discussed above, searching out in the language of myth an ever-expanding series of signifiers in the deluded hope that one or the sum of them all might miraculously restore the lost identity of sacred and profane. "The very end of myths," Barthes once warned us, "is to immobilize the world."[46]

The existence of some such magical promise is read negatively by many critics into the texture of *Parsifal*: that the opera enacts through its principal symbol, the Grail, a substitution by which genuine religious experience is replaced by esoteric knowledge or enlightenment, created and monitored by nothing more than the special effects of the Wagnerian theater.[47] This makes the opera more directly culpable than it would be if it were—as Nietzsche argued—no more than a reactionary Christian palinode.[48] It renders it a dangerous aesthetic deception that aggrandizes to art some species of privileged gnostic awareness reserved for an elite corps of initiates. Echoes of this suspicion undoubtedly contribute to the widely held if inchoate perception that *Parsifal* is somehow associated with the totalitarian terrors of the 20th century and the guilty role of German culture within these.[49] The mysteries of the Grail ritual have been from their medieval origins onwards haunted by the specter of exclusionist gnostic fantasy. The allure of gnostic transcendence that taints them resurfaces compellingly in the neo-medieval and hermetic leanings prominent in certain traditions of European Romanticism. Wagner's

[45]Jessie L. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* (1920; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[46]Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (London: Picador, 1972), p. 155.

[47]See for example Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne: A Study in Interpretation*, trans. Stewart Spencer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 165-172.

[48]Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner: A Musician's Problem*, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (Edinburgh: T.N. Foulis, 1911).

[49]Put most forcefully in Paul Lawrence Rose, *Wagner: Race and Revolution* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), pp. 158-170.

profound unease before the God of the Old Testament, and his loathing of Judaism and its allegedly baleful influence on primitive Christianity have consequently a strongly gnostic coloring to them, which is inadequately appreciated by Wagner scholarship. Ernest Renan's calculatedly unorthodox interpretation of the early Church provided Wagner, Cosima tells us,

> with another opportunity to talk about "the most horrible thing in history," the church, and the victory of Judaism over all else: "I cannot read two lines of Goethe without recognizing the Jewish Jehovah; for him Jesus was a problematical figure, but God was as clear as crystal." He explains to us how Plato's Theos paved the way for the Jewish God.[50]

Cosima also documents Wagner's fascination with the great first-century heresiarch Marcion, author of *Antitheses*, which set out to demonstrate the incompatibility of the Gods of the Old and New Testaments, the separation of Jesus and Jehovah. Marcion argued the classically gnostic case that Jesus brought to his disciples the cleansing redemptive knowledge of the true but hidden God of love, in contradistinction to the illusory patriarchal tyranny of the God of the Torah.[51] "The only thing that interests him," Cosima observes of her husband's reading of Renan, "is the mention of Marcion (that he wished to separate the New from the Old Testament)."[52]

Like many Romantics searching for a viable faith compatible with the hieratic claims of Romantic art, Wagner undoubtedly felt Gnosticism's antithetical pull on the imagination, its hostility to conventional monotheism and its promise of salvation through a secret initiation into mythic self-knowledge.[53] *Parsifal* certainly inherits the temptation to gnostic sublimity that appears to be intrinsic to the whole corpus of Grail romance and which certain predispositions in Wagner himself, and his conception of music drama, underscored. There are also indisputably disturbing continuities—as yet poorly understood—between the Romantic susceptibility to gnosticism and anti-Semitism. Once again, however, the formal structure of *Parsifal* and its definitive loyalty to the image of the innocent fool take up into the form of the

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[50]Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, p. 438.

[51]Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, trans. Anthony Alcock (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 162-66.

[52]Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, p. 432.

[53]For an all too rare, if polemical, reading of the gnostic influence on Romanticism, see Harold Bloom, *Omens of Millennium* (London: Fourth Estate, 1996).

opera the gnostic themes endemic to the Grail tradition only to subject them to a subtle process of demythologizing. In his responses to the pseudo-sacramental vocabulary of question-and-answer that surrounds the mysteries of the Grail, Parsifal refuses to cooperate with the gnostic rhetoric of secrets and initiations. To the repeated questions of Gurnemanz about his origins and his purpose in being at Montsalvat, Parsifal replies "I do not know," in striking contrast to the preceding series of quasi-ritual questions by which the squires had elicited from Gurnemanz the history of the Grail.[54] Faced with the impending spectacle of the procession, Parsifal asks ignorantly "Who is the Grail?," in an almost comic misstatement of the ritual question by which we know from the romance literature the Grail is meant to be achieved and the wound healed: "Whom does the Grail serve?" or "What is the purpose of the Grail?" Finally, at the conclusion of the ceremony, when Gurnemanz asks him, "Know you what you saw?," Parsifal's only reply is silence, prompting Gurnemanz's comment the he is "nothing but a fool."[55] But Parsifal's foolishness is a strategic property of the opera's struggle with religious truth, an anti-gnostic impulse that counteracts the destructively occult and elitist elements of the Grail. Parsifal becomes neither a neophyte nor an adept. Rather, his internalization of the figures of the quest romance is a self-curtailment that brings secrets and mysteries to an end and which commits itself to what Wagner believed to be "the truth ineffable": the knowledge that is no knowledge but frees the Grail fraternity from its fruitless solipsism.

In what is a compound irony for both Gnosticism and anti-Semitism, modern scholarship suggests that the ritual questions which form the shadowy core of the Grail ceremony have their origins in the Jewish *seder* meal or annual commemoration of the Passover, where the eldest child asks the presiding father about the meaning of the actions taking place at the table.[56] In the *seder*, the answers to the questions constitute the community's statement of identity and encapsulate its history. Continuity between past and present is secured and proper mediation between the realms of sacred and profane is maintained by the mechanism of Revelation. Parsifal's initial refusal of the question at the Grail ceremony in Wagner's opera can then be further interpreted as a rejection of the forms of mediation that the Grail

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[54]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 93.

[55]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 92-93.

[56]Eugene Weinraub, *Chretien's Jewish Grail* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976).

offers. The Grail does not offer revelation but initiation; power and not love. "Parsifal does not *understand* the riddle of the Grail," states Lévi-Strauss, "and remains unable to solve it until he *relives* the catastrophe at its source."[57] Parsifal in his silence thereby exposes the problem of disrupted communication that all myths of the Percevalian kind encode:

> It is the reverse of another, equally universal model – that of the 'Oedipal' myths, whose problematic structure is symmetrical though inverted. For the Oedipal myths pose the problem of a communication that is at first exceptionally effective (the solving of a riddle), but then leads to excess in the form of incest – the sexual union of people who ought to be distant from one another – and of plague. [...] Percevalian myths deal with communication interrupted in three ways: the answer offered to an unasked question (which is the opposite of a riddle); the chastity required of one or more heroes (contrary to incestuous behaviour); and the wasteland...[58]

Even at its narrative climax, the commitment of the opera to this question-rejecting reversal of Oedipal excess remains total. Parsifal is unique among successful Grail questors in that he never asks the question, even when he has passed through the trials of Oedipal temptation and acquired heroic compassion. If Lévi-Strauss is correct, Parsifal does not ask the question in Act 3 because he does not, in fact, seek to re-establish any transaction or mediation between the separated spheres of sacred and profane, between the domains of Amfortas and Klingsor. These exist, after all, only as manifestations of the primordial dialectic maintained by the punishing dualism of the unachieved Grail. Parsifal aspires instead to a transvaluation that exposes the underlying dichotomy as a mirage of signification, and which holds out the ineffable promise of a signification without division; an authentically Eucharistic real presence. "[... F]or the two," noted the neglected mythographer Joseph Campbell in his meditation on this Wagnerian paradox, "though apparently separate, are the same [...]."

> And that is the lesson of the bleeding lance symbolically borne about the great hall, with the blood running down the length of its shaft and over the bearer's hand into his sleeve. It tells of the

[57]Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The View from Afar*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel and Phoebe Hoss (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), p. 231.

[58]Lévi-Strauss 231-232.

lance by which the Maimed Fisher was wounded: Amfortas on
his bed of pain, Christ upon the Cross; announcing the sense of
the mystery to come, of the Grail, the Perfection of Paradise, in
which opposites are at one.[59]

At the climax of the opera, Parsifal returns to Montsalvat bringing not the
question but the Spear—a departure from the sources that has puzzled some
commentators. But it seems clear that the return of the Spear is part of the
broader reluctance of the opera to endorse the workings of the alienated Grail.
It also reinforces Parsifal's repudiation of the fraternity's militaristic
appropriation of the Grail sacrament. This pacifism began with Parsifal's
breaking of the bow and is continued into his annulment of Klingsor's
aggression. The legacy of the Spear is, of course, vital to the reworking of its
meanings. It is the weapon of war and imperial power that pierced Christ's
side ("...which shed that flood"[60]). It then assumes a new, hallowed status as
signifier of Christ's compassion, of the pacifist submission to sacral violence
that ends violence and brings peace ("tokens of God's love"[61]). But this
purified condition is travestied when it is subsequently reinvested with the
character of a feudal weapon, used by Amfortas and seized by Klingsor to
maim the Keeper of the Grail and re-open the split between sacred and
profane ("the Spear is held in Klingsor's hand;/and now he uses it to wound
our brothers"[62]). Parsifal performs a Christ-like, incarnational function in
once more redeeming the Spear from the discourse of war, refusing it as a
weapon and reversing its malevolent intent. Opposites converge, as question
and answer become unified in the declaration that "One weapon only
serves:/the Spear that smote/Must heal you of your wound."[63] Instead of
bringing together question and answer in a gesture that would serve
paradoxically only to underline the ontological separateness of sacred and
profane, Parsifal reunites Grail and Spear through the agency of the blood that
is both Amfortas's and Christ's. Blood that is for Girard the ultimate signifier
of sacral violence becomes again the sign of its rejection:

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[59]Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 459.

[60]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 90.

[61]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 90.

[62]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 91.

[63]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 125.

> Oh! Wondrous miracle of joy!
> This holy weapon that has healed you,
> upon its point fresh blood is flowing
> and yearning to join the kindred fountain,
> that darkly in the Grail is glowing.[64]

The Spear, then, does the work of the permanently adjourned question. Only the instrument that inflicted the wound can heal it. The Spear's miraculous transition across competing symbolic systems illustrates the closure of the rupture between sacred and profane that it first caused, then cured, then caused again. Its final action is possessed of that same playful inversion and chiasmus which stamps Parsifal's progress through the opera's landscape from beginning to end, as a tool designed for injury and death is made unexpectedly into the channel of new life.

The innocence that seemingly exempts Parsifal from the oppressive influence of the Grail and its defective spirituality, and which enables him to mend the split of sacred and profane, is in its shocks and reversals fundamentally comic. This may seem a disconcerting assertion in the context of a work of art so obviously dedicated to the high seriousness of religious truth and shot through with the cry of pain. There are several important references to laughter in the opera, but none of them is humanizing and all are oppressive. There is Herzeleide's laugh at the return of her son, which Kundry reports reproachfully to Parsifal. There is Kundry's own "remorseless laughter" when she overcomes Amfortas, and the derisive "laughing, laughing"[65] she repeatedly heaps on him in token of his humiliation. Ultimately, there is the mocking laugh Kundry once directed at the condemned Christ and which sentenced her to her subsequent derelict quest. There endures, nonetheless, in the pattern of Parsifal's prophylactic foolishness before the unfolding of the Grail tragedy, an alternative sense of what Bakhtin calls "laughter invisible": an inner logic of the humorous, which "continues to determine the structure of the image [... W]e see, as it were, the track left by laughter in the structure of represented reality, but the laughter itself we do not hear."[66] This is the kind of laughter that confers on Parsifal the ability to dispel illusions, see through deceits, and rescue people and objects from the

[64]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 125-126.

[65]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 115.

[66]Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (1963; Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1984), p. 178.

apparently ineluctable destiny their past has laid upon them. In the comic sensibility of the clown or the fool, Bakhtin also notes, there is "nothing for memory and tradition to do. One ridicules in order to forget."[67] Kundry ridicules because she cannot forget.

The action of liberating the Grail's victims from the past is especially intensified in the crucial encounter of Parsifal and Kundry in Act 2, where memory is one of the chief devices by which Kundry attempts her seduction. This scene in the opera is the episode that causes greatest offence to contemporary criticism because of the role it assigns to Kundry, and the expulsion of the female and of feminine desire on which it seems to depend.[68] Interpreted in terms of the opera's deep interrogation of power and enslavement, however, and its aesthetics of play and innocence, these concerns, though not underestimated, can be subtly reformulated. The pernicious dichotomy of purified male and polluted female undoubtedly menaces the moral scheme of *Parsifal*, but it is a dichotomy that the opera finally rejects along with the whole dialectic of sacred and profane from which it derives. At the climactic moment of the scene, Parsifal's participation in the wound of Amfortas, is an existential revelation to him of the unitary nature of redeemed matter that Kundry's enforced seduction threatens irreparably to shatter. The combination of sexual temptress and consoling imago, which Kundry brings to her intended entrapment of Parsifal, shows straight away that she belongs to the Oedipal symbolic order of the Grail—its realm of memory, questions and answers, deferred disclosures and sublimated longings; its "family romance" of patriarchal dynasties and successions where everyone is ultimately related to everyone else. Against this are set the firmly anti-Oedipal attributes of innocence and forgetting that have until this turning-point in the opera made Parsifal immune to the forbidden allure of hierarchy and power. Parsifal's refusal to ask the question, both at the beginning and at the end of the opera, is one with his refusal of Kundry's embrace. It is part of the same renunciation of the Oedipal symbolic order with its fatalistic account of split subjectivity and the dualism of spirit and flesh.

In the desiccated spirituality of the unachieved Grail, Kundry has been made to represent all that exists outside the fraternity and its illusory truth.

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[67]Mikhail Bakhtin, "Epic and the Novel," in Michael Holquoist and Caryl Emerson, ed. and trans., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 23.

[68]Summarized and extended by Jeremy Tambling, *Opera and the Culture of Fascism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), pp. 47-60.

She is "like a savage beast," unfed, unhoused, "a heathen maid,/ a sorceress
[...] under a curse [...] for some former guilt still unforgiven."[69] Her reputation
shows her to be material, improper, indeterminate, incapable of conscious
mastery, without self-identity, capricious, formless, and multiple. Neverthe-
less, as matter to the Grail knights' spirit, Kundry is the mirror, the specular
scene, upon which disordered male reason operates, providing reason with
material for its self-justifications yet remaining outside ideality. Male reason
in the Grail universe is therefore necessarily predicated on the subordination
of the feminine, understood as the principle of connection to mutinous matter,
which Luce Irigary tellingly associates with the mother's reproductive body.[70]
In the subordination of Kundry, the corrupted logic and self-denials of the
Grail hold out the possibility of a specific counter-power: sexuality, with
which Kundry has ruined Amfortas and terrified Klingsor to the point of self-
castration. If at the origin of male identity in the Grail's dualistic theology
there is a constitutive difference from woman and from matter, then male
identity must rid itself of its own origin in the connection to matter and to the
mother. But the repressed mother always returns, and it is with this crisis that
Parsifal must contend in Act 2, the culminating and most grievous conse-
quence of the unachieved Grail:

> Can you remember her anxious cry
> when late and far you were roaming?
> Can you remember how she laughed
> in relief when you returned;
> and how she caught you in her embrace?
> Oh, did you not fear her kisses then?[71]

Kundry's calling forth of memory is an attempt to lock Parsifal into the
ethical symmetries of the Grail with their intrinsic emphasis on guilt and
remorse, alternative versions of the repetition compulsion which afflicts the
wider Grail fraternity. From this guilt Kundry can then offer the imagined
absolution of sexual release. In her gradual appropriation of the voice of the
mother, shifting from reported speech to near ventriloquism, Kundry epito-
mizes the maternal utterance which, in the Oedipal scenario, reflects back at
the child his emerging subjectivity. This is the action of Silverman's "acoustic
mirror" which, heard in both an interior and an exterior manner by both

[69]Wagner, *Parsifal*, *p.*88.

[70]Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1985).

[71]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 112.

sender and receiver, "can spill over from subject to object and object to subject, violating the bodily limits upon which classic subjectivity depends, and so smoothing the way for projection and introjection."[72] Kundry's attempted seduction, particularly in the sensuous setting of an opera, is a remarkably overt sexualization of this process. It foregrounds and exaggerates the Oedipal assimilation at which in most circumstances the voice of the mother only hints and which the huge prohibition of the incest taboo normalizes and contains. The axis of projection and introjection is fully eroticized by Kundry to bring Parsifal into an alignment with forces she can understand and control; these same effects of male fantasy which have pushed Kundry herself out of the social and into the zone of the alien and the forbidden:

> Had you not felt such grief,
> then consolation's
> sweet relief you'd not know;
> let sorrow that you feel.
> let torment yield
> to the joy that love can reveal.[73]

The concentration of Oedipal guilt precipitates Parsifal's most critical conflict of self-understanding, as the radical innocence that has so far protected him collides with the burden of memory: "Have I remembered anything?/What else but folly lives in me?"[73] It is then no surprise that the antidote Kundry holds out for Parsifal's onrush of guilt, as well as containing erotic engulfment, echoes powerfully with the gnostic promise of the Grail :

> Acknowledge
> your fault and then it's ended;
> by knowledge your folly soon is mended.[73]

The knowledge that the unachieved Grail and those ensnared in its rites consistently confer is always memory, memory which is like Derrida's ghost, of a past that was never a present; an irretrievable, irredeemable past, contemplation of which immobilizes human choice and action. Kundry offers Parsifal knowledge as vicarious incest, and this may be for him its key temptation. In a realm that is, as we have seen, riven by splits and divisions

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[72]Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 80.

[73]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 112.

that emanate from an anterior division in signification itself, a bifurcation of sacred and profane, Kundry extends to Parsifal a counterfeit pledge of division healed and fragmentation made whole. The incestuous union she begins to enact in her infamous kiss (accompanied in Hans Jürgen Syberberg's film of the opera by the presentation of the maternal breast[74]) parodies the sacramental union of matter and flesh the Grail was intended to represent. It appeals directly to the torn subjectivity Parsifal has now internalized as a result of his imagined encounter with the mother:

> For love that gave you
> life and being,
> must death and folly both remove,
> love sends
> you now
> a mother's blessing, greets a son
> with love's first kiss.[75]

The sudden irruption into his psyche of the awareness of Amfortas's wound, which Parsifal abruptly suffers at this defining moment of the opera, is much more than the act of purified memory some critics have suggested.[76] Nor is it the undeserved *coup de theatre* others have seen.[77] It is entirely consistent with the overarching theology, which the opera struggles to express from its dissilient elements, that the full significance of the wound should come to Parsifal at the point when he is faced with the act of ultimate transgression, and especially a transgression that closely imitates the primal synthesis of sacred and profane the opera is striving to recover. The wound simultaneously signifies the original unity of spirit and matter and its loss through human error. It is a conflicted sign. Its possession of Parsifal is therefore emphatically not a rejection of the body or of sexuality to spurn woman and achieve the Grail, but a recognition of the sacrilege practiced on the male and female bodies—and on all material things—by the artificial

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[74]*Parsifal*, dir. Hans Jürgen Syberberg (Munich, 1982).

[75]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 113.

[76]See, e.g., Lucy Beckett, *Richard Wagner's Parsifal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 139-140. Although the detail of her analysis smoothes out the tensions too readily, Beckett understands, correctly in my view, that the scene is richly informed by a complex Christian theology of forgiveness.

[77]Suggested in a very provocative essay by Barry Emslie, "Woman as Image and Narrative in Wagner's *Parsifal*: A Case Study," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3/2 (1991): 118.

dualism of sacred and profane. It is the cry of the human voice to end the
violation once and for all:

> The wound that I saw bleeding
> is bleeding now in me!...
> The yearning, the wild fearful
> yearning
> that fills my sense and holds them fast!
> Oh! – pain of loving!
> How all things tremble and quiver and
> shake
> in sinful, guilty yearning![78]

The sheer physicality of the wound rewrites Parsifal's innocence as
compassion just as Kundry's seduction had threatened to obliterate it with
shame. There is undeniably a displacement of the feminine occurring in this
process. The wound restores Parsifal's masculinity and releases him from
Kundry's infantilizations. It signals a choice of the lineage of the father who
named him and whose symbolic role Kundry tried to efface in her calling of
him, as opposed to the mother who brought forgetfulness. It is thus Parsifal's
triumphant act of male remembering and a reversal of his condition of
innocence. But this redeemed remembering must be seen in the light of the
disordered remembering urged upon him by Kundry, which is itself an
inflection of the unachieved Grail's perfidious memory myth. The sexual
politics of *Parsifal* do imply an erasure of the disruptive sexuality of Kundry,
as feminist readings suggest, but this need not be seen simply as the
suppression of female difference. Feminist critiques are too often reluctant to
see the sexuality of Kundry as itself the artificial misogynistic construction of
male desire at the service of patriarchal exchange.[79] When the reformed
Kundry enters the third act of the opera with the phrase "serving ... serving"[80]
on her lips, it need not be read univocally as a declaration of female abjection.
It may be a fully humanized affirmation of the founding ethical principle by
which the presence of the Grail was originally meant to be demonstrated. It is
the role Amfortas spoiled and Klingsor could not accept. It is a phrase any of

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[78]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 113.

[79]This is true of the otherwise remarkable post-structuralist exploration of the abducted voice
of Kundry by Suzanne R. Stewart, "The Theft of the Operatic Voice: Masochistic Seduction
in Wagner's *Parsifal*," *The Musical Quarterly* 80/4 (1996): 597-629.

[80]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 118.

the characters could utter in the final scene. It could well be the longed-for answer to the Grail Question itself.

The products of Romantic art habitually represent ecstatic or visionary experience of the sort recorded in *Parsifal* as an erotic encounter with a female figure. Correspondingly, the deepest anxieties of Romanticism frequently take shape in confrontations with power in a female form, or in separations from, losses of, or betrayals by a woman. *Parsifal*'s ambivalent negotiations with the feminine as Other cut across the ambiguous boundaries of gender by making the object of its quest-romance a different kind of vision, one that calls for a transvaluation of sexual difference. The nature of this transvaluation is doubtless obscure, but it does seem to involve a transfigured understanding of the gendered human body and its status as a sacred text. It is not enough to say that promiscuous woman is the obstacle to transcendence in *Parsifal*, sacrificed to a patriarchal myth of chaste male achievement. The opera expends much of its musical and poetic energy casting into doubt the whole notion of transcendence as it is commonly conceived in Romantic aesthetics and as it is given imaginative substance in the gendered rhetoric of Romantic love—nowhere more so than in Wagner's own *Tristan and Isolde* where, famously, Wagner once considered giving Parsifal a walk-on part. It is the failure of the divided imagination to cope with the organization of desire which reveals Romantic love to be the final charade of the unachieved Grail.

If Kundry is asked to bear an impossible burden in *Parsifal*, then it lies not principally in her gender but in her history, the weight of which she tries to communicate to Parsifal when her attempted seduction of him appears to be failing. The trauma she uncovers to him is unmistakably religious, whatever (or perhaps because of) the harrowing sexual or racial ramifications it may have acquired for subsequent ages. Hence her description of it as "my wound,"[81] a deliberate comparison with the affliction of Amfortas and another link to the Grail's disordered chain of signification. The narrative syncretism of the Wagnerian project is at its most audacious in Kundry's lament, but also at its most mythopoetically productive. It takes up allusions to some of the major symbolic motifs in Romantic thought (and, fittingly, in Wagner's earlier operas) and resolves them into a series of fragmentary visionary metaphors, hinting in the process that these may be all that remains of the Judeo-Christian framework once the activity of Romantic re-invention has worked its course. The grafting on to the person of Kundry of the figure of the Wandering Jew is a startling example of this, unique to Wagner's retelling of the Grail story.

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[81] Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 115.

The resultant synthesis succeeds in an indirect way in associating Kundry and her sufferings with the lure of gnostic exceptionalism which, as we have seen, the Grail itself most conspicuously enshrines and by which *Parsifal* as a work of Romantic art seems both fascinated and repelled.

> I saw Him – Him –
> and mocked Him...
> On me fell His look!
> I seek Him now from world to world,
> till once more I behold Him.
> In deepest woe –
> I feel that He must be near,
> I see that look He gave.
> Then once more my accursed laughter
> fills me...[82]

In the traditions of the Wandering Jew as they were articulated anew in the muddled dissenting theologies of Romanticism, the mockery of Jesus by the variously-named watchman lost much of its earlier anti-Semitic bias and acquired instead the character of a protest against deity itself.[83] Ahasuerus the Wanderer hence became a heroic martyr in the literature of Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry and other anti-clerical movements that claimed a spurious descent from the gnostic heretics of the Middle Ages and before. Gnosticism is in its tortured attitude to lost deity a kind of esoteric atheism, and it is characteristic of such heretical systems that they contradict themselves in the act of inverting orthodoxy. We have seen that in the theology of Marcion, which Wagner admired, Jesus was regarded as a rebel against Jehovah, as one who came not to fulfill but to destroy the Law. Wagner seems to have been drawn to this view of Jesus and to have bemoaned Jesus' failure fully to purge Old Testament contamination from the faith that he founded. The Wandering Jew, however, confounds the Son in the Father, which is another reason why Kundry and her legend must be repudiated by the opera. Kundry's curse is not simply a recapitulation of the historical persecution of Judaism for allegedly failing to recognize the Messiah. In the total mythic economy of the opera it is much subtler. Kundry's scorn of Jesus, whom she cannot name, is the

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[82]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 114.

[83]See, e.g., in Christian Schubart's *Ahasver* of 1786, Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* of 1796, Percy Bysshe Shelley's *The Wandering Jew* of 1812. The subject is examined in Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes, *The Wandering Jew: Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

gnostic blindness that is locked into the dualism of the Grail, trapped by the vertiginous spectacle of endlessly-deferred divinity which it cannot decide whether to worship or despise:

> I sink again into the shameful night,
> from which, remorseful, scarce I wake.
> One I desire with deathly yearning,
> one whom I knew, though I despised Him:
> let me upon His breast lie weeping.[84]

Her confused oscillation between the figures of Parsifal and Jesus betrays the doctrinal dissonance which lies at the heart of gnostic theodicy and which Romantic metaphysics found so subversively alluring. Christ as the fearful disclosure of divine tyranny; Christ as the prophetic witness to the hidden godhead obscured by the catastrophe that is Creation: gnostic theodicy vacillates between these two contradictory positions producing the defiant guilt that Kundry's anguish typifies. In her final desperate bid to attain the obscene union she has deluded herself into seeing as salvation, Kundry holds out to Parsifal the prize that is always gnosticism's last hubristic temptation:

> The full embrace of my loving
> surely to godhead will raise you.
> Redeem the world then, if that's your task:
> become a god for this moment,
> let me be condemned for evermore,
> my wound remain unclosed.[85]

Parsifal's successful resistance to this plea is, in the often specious and competing theological schemes of the opera, the point where it achieves its redemption from the gnostic lie: "Highest holy wonder!/Redeemed the Redeemer!"[86]

Wagner knew that the wound Kundry fears might be forever unclosed is the sexual wound, the wound of sexual differentiation and separateness which, in the fractured gnostic Creation, cannot be healed except in the impossibility of the Oedipal embrace. This fatalism is also a stern judgment on the erotic idealism of European High Romanticism at the end of which, in a profound sense, *Parsifal* self-consciously stands. The figure of the Wanderer stalks that

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[84]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 113-114.

[85]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 115.

[86]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 126.

tradition, like the specter of its own unconscious. In several seminal Romantic texts, the Wanderer becomes a poet, and he puts to sea. The first of these may be Coleridge's Mariner. He in turn looks forward to Heine's Flying Dutchman, "the Wandering Jew of the Ocean," sketched in the *Memoirs of Herr von Schnabelwopski* of 1834.[87] The Dutchman who seizes also Wagner's imagination is doomed to sail till the Day of Judgment, not for having mocked Christ but because he once swore by the Devil. A woman's fidelity can release his body and save his soul, but marriage (that other sacramental union of the sexually separated) means the death of both parties. As the Dutchman's bride consummates their love by drowning herself, the enchanted ship sinks to the bottom of the sea.

The symbolic coincidence of orgasm and death is a familiar cliché of Romantic art. Wagner complicates the texture of the metaphor, which dominates much of his music, by prescribing with Heine that extinction shall be by water. The nympholeptic picaro steers his boat towards the disastrously fused Pole and Evening Stars, confusing the symbolism of Aphrodite Pandemos and Aphrodite Urania. *Eros* beckons the suicidal sailor Tristan on his night-sea journey towards the hallucinatory female, and in the *tornata* of the love-death forces together the elements of the climactic metaphor for Romantic love. In *Parsifal*, this false trope is shockingly exposed as incest. Incest's libidinal converse is fratricide, the narcissist's rage against his *Doppelgänger*. We recall that the mark on the forehead of the "fabled Hebrew wanderer" in Canto II of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* is interchangeable with that of his "curst Cain's unresting doom"— with the sign set on the Wandering Jew's biblical precursor, lest he be murdered, by the Father of the Son whose Passio will one day be mocked.[88] Cain rises up against his brother, and the Wandering Jew in effect spurns himself. We also recall the stigma "like Cain or Christ's – oh! that it should be so," blazes from the "ensanguined brow" of Shelley's "phantom poet" in *Adonais* as he flees "astray/With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness."[89] The mirror-identity of Jesus and the Jew partially explains the wound that Amfortas, Kundry and, finally, Parsifal all share, and the wandering that brings Parsifal to the redemptive confrontation of Act 3.

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[87]Heinrich Heine, *Works of Prose*, trans. E. B. Ashton, ed. Hermann Kasten (London: L. B. Fischer, 1943).

[88]Lord Byron, "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," in Jerome J. McGann, ed., *The Oxford Authors: Byron* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 81.

[89]Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Adonais," in Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers, ed., *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 396.

Water is the sign of Kundry's atonement and the agent of her release, as it was and was not for the Dutchman and his bride, for Tristan and Isolde—even for Wotan himself. Parsifal baptizes Kundry from a holy spring, and the tears she can now shed thaw the frozen earth like sacred rain. Winter's enchantment melts under the spell of Good Friday. The whore who anoints Parsifal's feet and dries them with her hair plays Mary Magdalene to Parsifal's Jesus. But here Wagner has more nuanced reasons for making his Wandering Jew a woman. Kundry in Act 3 reproduces the innocent fool, Parsifal himself, who first enters the opera carrying the bow with which, like Coleridge's proto-quester, he has shot the water-bird of good omen. Parsifal and all of his predecessor knights, including Amfortas, may be errant in a double sense. Like the Jew they wander in search of salvation, but their self-regard may trap them in a fay mirror-realm, the Garden of the Antichrist, the antitype of the Paradise they seek. Kundry, mock-Urania of Klingsor's bower, plays a double symbolic role reproducing the duplicity of the unachieved Grail: she is simultaneously the Wanderer and the false goal of his quest:

> Be purified, you pure one, by this water!
> It washes every guilt
> and care away from you...
>
> My first of tasks I thus perform:–
> Baptized be,
> have faith in the Redeemer![90]

This lengthy sequence of subterranean Romantic metaphors, pointing obscurely to and from Kundry, implies a final oblique affiliation that positions the figure of Kundry at the heart of the gnostic sorrow. Kundry's relationship to Klingsor, for whom she is the multiply-named "Rose of Hades,"[91] echoes the founding gnostic protomyth of Simon Magus, the failed and rejected disciple of the *Acts of the Apostles* and the New Testament Apocrypha.[92] Simon sought from Peter and the post-Resurrection Church not faith but magical power, and when turned away was left to roam around Asia Minor with his reluctant acolyte, the prostitute Helen, preaching a heretical gospel. This history Wagner would have learned from his avid reading of August

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[90]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 122.

[91]Wagner, *Parsifal*, p. 102.

[92]Cf. *Acts* 8:9-12.

Friedrich Gfrörer's multi-volume study of early Christianity.[93] Simon becomes the patron saint of gnostic imposture and ambition. His slave Helen, legend has it, he sells to men as the source of salvation; salvation through the secret gnosis of the flesh, the saving illumination of the sexual coupling which discloses the truth to its debauched initiates. For Helen in her abjection, Simon proclaims, is none other than the Sophia Prunicos, the Fallen Wisdom toiling through countless incarnations in the prison house of matter from which she both seeks and offers liberation. She is the gnostic Holy Spirit who in her catastrophic desire for the godhead which she beheld from afar took flesh from the sea, falling into the blindness and vindictiveness which brings forth the errors of embodied consciousness and sexual division. This is the *urtext* of all gnostic heresy.[94] Its presence in the palimpsest of the opera shows that from being in the end a scapegoat victim, the character of Kundry is in her ambiguous marginality the key to *Parsifal*'s grievous struggle to sustain coherence of vision once its competing accounts of human salvation have been set loose.

The degraded union offered by Sophia-Kundry, which masquerades as salvation, becomes the morbid lure of Oedipal oblivion that reverberates through *Parsifal* but is contested and finally overcome. We have seen that the bringing together of separated elements, like the Grail's question and answer, like the Spear and the Grail themselves, is an ambiguous trope in *Parsifal*, always overshadowed by the fear that the desired synthesis, like incest, simply reinscribes the underlying ontological dualism it pretends to be abolishing. This is another of *Parsifal*'s fundamental rebukes to the Romantic tradition from which it originates. *Parsifal* hints darkly that the incest taboo does much more than express only the disordered sexual dynamic that underpins Romantic art and its bogus juxtaposition of sacred and profane. It is in fact the displacement of still deeper and essentially *religious* anxieties which the glittering fragments of gnostic myth in their own melancholy and abortive fashion disclose. The transformative erotic union of male and female, which Romanticism habitually presents as the totalizing expression of its *eros*, is not reducible to the dramatization of Oedipal tension. Rather, it is a resurgence of the gnostic image of archetypal androgyny. Androgyny may be either a symbol of the mysterious nature of God which gnostic insight uncovers, or a

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[93]Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, p. 152.

[94]Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, pp. 147-152. See also Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 103-112.

final monstrous illusion disguising narcissism and depravity.[95] Either way, in the crisis between Parsifal and Kundry, the opera momentarily rescinds the metaphysics of Romantic love to expose the elements that metaphors keep apart as well as those they seemingly unite. Syberberg saw to the heart of this ambiguity in *Parsifal* when in his film of the opera he replaced the male actor playing Parsifal with a woman at the point when Kundry's seduction is finally averted.

When Goethe told Eckermann in 1829 that the classic was healthy and the Romantic sickly, he had in mind this very unreliability of Romantic metaphor, which seems to offer healing but in fact only extends its own malady. At its end, *Parsifal* appears to share this mistrust of Romantic desire, expressing a deep skepticism towards the overarching claims of Romantic love—its poorly concealed dumbshow of gnostic tropes and figures, and its impossible promise of a unitary human truth that ends all separations of spirit and flesh. Parsifal's assumption of the wound of Amfortas reveals Schopenhauer's *Mitleid* to be more than a compelling Romantic ethic. Taking on the suffering of the other, experiencing the other's pain and internalizing the other's conflicts, are set forth by the opera as the only viable means of re-establishing the unity of sacred and profane, body and soul, self and not-self; rescuing language from its complicity with cosmic dualism. The religious imagination in *Parsifal* brings redemption to the redeemer because the opera is in some sense itself the object to be redeemed, to be made a vehicle of religious truths from which gnostic sophistry and romantic self-delusion—in the end perhaps synonymous —have been purged. The process of redemption is, as we have seen, a titanic struggle. But through its evasions and aversions, its artifice and contradiction, *Parsifal* strives to reassert the incarnational conviction that is the core of its musical motivation: that the wound and the healer are one.

> The wounded healer plies the steel
> that questions the distempered part;
> beneath the bleeding hands we feel
> the sharp compassion of the healer's art.[96]

[95]Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, pp. 159-163.

[96]T.S. Eliot, "Four Quartets: East Coker", *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), p. 201.

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Part III

Musical Ekpressions of the Sacred

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Eschatological Aspects in Music:
The Dream of Gerontius by Edward Elgar

Eva Maria Jensen

The Dream of Gerontius is one of Edward Elgar's (1857-1934) master-pieces and one of the most extraordinary oratorios of modern time. Written in 1900 for the Birmingham Music Festival, it became the most popular musical work in England, only surpassed by Händel's *Messiah,* appearing frequently on the programs of all the major English choir festivals. On the continent it was played quite often at the beginning of the century, starting with a very successful performance in Düsseldorf in 1902. It was after this performance that Richard Strauss called Elgar the best English composer of modern times.

The oratorio has no real plot, written as it is to a poem of Cardinal John Henry Newman from 1865. In the first section of the work, we witness the final hours and death of an old man (Gerontius), and in the second section, his soul's journey through the different regions of the netherworld, until the very moment of the Divine Judgment. The subject may seem quite unusual for an oratorio, a genre that often features Old Testament heroes and other stories from the Bible. However, the subject seems to be typical for the turn of the century, when many composers tried to answer in musical works some of the essential questions of humankind, the question of death and what comes afterwards being one of them.

It is my aim in this paper to analyze how Elgar copes with the eschato-logical aspects of Newman's text, how he expresses in music those issues that are difficult if not impossible to express in words. At the same time I aim to show to what degree this unusual work is the continuation of a tradition of European music that goes back several centuries.[1]

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[1] The score was published by Novello in 1928.

Elgar's Approach to and Use of Newman's Text

Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-1890) was a well-known English theologian of the Anglican Church, originally associated with the Oxford Movement. He converted to the Catholic faith in 1845 and became a cardinal in 1879. In 1864, he wrote his famous autobiography, *Apologia pro vita sua*. This was followed a year later by the poem, *The Dream of Gerontius*, which became extremely popular in the second half of the 19th century. Even the average Englishman was familiar with this work, not only as a confessional text, but also as a part of English cultural heritage. This popularity was owed to General Charles George Gordon, an English war hero who had died under mysterious circumstances in Khartoum in 1885. He owned a copy of *The Dream of Gerontius*, which he had marked with his own annotations. This he gave, shortly before his death, to Frank Power, a correspondent of *The Times*. The copy then circulated in England. Elgar received this "annotated" copy in 1889[2] as one of his wedding presents. Cardinal Newman himself was aware of his poem's "Gordon-connection," and was deeply moved by the fact that the book and the description of a soul preparing for death had been in Gordon's hands, thus showing that "he [Gordon] was, even on his death bed, following this common advice that we should live everyday as if it were to be our last."[3]

It is probable that Elgar, who was a Catholic himself, knew Newman's poem from his childhood.[4] The renewed interest in the poem just before the turn of the century was surely owing to Elgar's fascination with "the hero as outsider." As a matter of fact, a hero of that kind appears in his previous works: in the cantatas *The Black Knight* (1892), *King Olaf* (1896), and

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[2]The "wedding-present" version is found in almost all accounts addressing Elgar's familiarity with Newman's poem and General Gordon's remarks. Conversely, Jerrold Nothrop Moore in *Spirit of England: Edward Elgar in his World* (London: Heinemann, 1984), p. 60, claims that Elgar already owned that copy in 1887, when his future mother-in-law was dying.

[3]Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 741.

[4]He received, in fact, a little holy picture with the very beginning of *The Dream of Gerontius* ("Jesus, Mary, Joseph, pray for me in my own agony") when he was a little boy. This was given to him by a friendly priest, perhaps as a measure of conciliation after the death of Edward's little sister. Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 290. The picture itself may be seen on p. 54 in J.N. Moore, *Spirit of England*.

Figure 1: *The Death of St. Joseph*, engraving given by F. Waterworth in September 1868 to the 11-year-old Edward Elgar. Reprinted from J.N. Moore, *Spirit of England: Edward Elgar in his World* (London: Heinemann, 1984), p. 54.

The engraving given the young Edward Elgar carried on its back the inscription: "Jesus, Mary, Joseph, pray for me in my own agony," a wording very similar to the beginning of Cardinal Newman's poem, "Jesus, Maria – I am near to death."

Caractacus (1898).[5] At the same time, Elgar's religious interest expressed itself in another work, *The Light of Life* (*Lux Christi*), an oratorio written in 1896, and in his plans for writing an oratorio about Judas (another "hero as outsider").[6] He composed only one musical theme for this work, a Judas theme, which he reused in Part II of *The Dream of Gerontius* as the theme of The Angel of the Agony.[7]

Example 1: Elgar's theme of Judas, composed for an abandoned oratorio, reused in Part II of *The Dream of Gerontius* as the theme of The Angel of the Agony (see, e.g., soloist + vc, cue 106)

[5]Andreas Friesenhagen, *"The Dream of Gerontius" von Edward Elgar: Das englische Oratorium an der Wende zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Köln: Verlag Dohr, 1994), p. 80. The term "The hero as outsider" is Friesenhagen's.

[6]J.N. Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, p. 295.

[7]August Johannes Jaeger writes to Elgar on 22 May 1900: "I recognize the chief theme as having belonged to 'Judas.' Nobody could dream that it was not originally inspired by these very words of Newman's." (Cf. Percy M. Young, ed., *Letters to Nimrod. Edward Elgar to August Jaeger 1897-1908* [London: Dennis Dobson, 1965], p. 87.) Jaeger (1860-1909), born in Germany, had come to England in 1878. From 1890 he worked at Novello, Elgar's publishing house. Nicknamed "Nimrod," he was one of Elgar's closest friends.

Cardinal Newman's poem, *The Dream of Gerontius*,[8] contains 912 lines divided into seven sections. Elgar reduces the text to 435 lines comprised in what he labels Parts I and II. While in Newman's text, one section deals with the dying of Gerontius and the other six with his soul's experiences in the netherworld, Elgar creates more balance for Gerontius's dying and his soul's afterlife. His condensations concern primarily the "afterlife" components; in the first section, he only cuts 23 out of 170 lines. The proportions between "life before death" and "the afterlife" are thus quite different: in Elgar's version, Part I (the dying) makes up a third of the whole, whereas in Newman's it constitutes one fifth of the poem.[9] This places quite a bit more emphasis on the "dying" in Elgar's version, while for Newman, this was only "an introduction" to the "action proper."[10] The reductions are as follows: in section one of Newman's text, Gerontius's part at the beginning and the litany of his praying friends are considerably shortened.[11] There are lengthy deletions in sections 2 and 3, where the Soul meets it's Guardian Angel: Their conversations are abridged, some of them in the form of a duet. Elgar retains the most important aspects of Newman's fourth section, dealing with the Demons, but considerably reduces the comments of the Angel. The poem's fifth section introduces the choruses of Angels and Angelicals,[12] placed in different regions of Heaven. Elgar makes much of the Angelicals, possibly as a welcomed contrast to the Demons. Moreover, the Angelicals' choruses give Elgar an opportunity to form a great musical movement towards the climax. Newman's repetition of one stanza[13] at the beginning of each chorus enables Elgar to cast this passage in the form

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[8]I have been using the following edition: Cardinal Newman, *The Dream of Gerontius*, with introduction and notes by Maurice Francis Egan (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1906).

[9]The exact numbers are: Elgar = 147 lines (Part I) and 278 lines (Part II), Newman =170 lines (section 1) and 732 lines (sections 2-7).

[10]A. Friesenhagen, "*The Dream of Gerontius*," pp. 75-76.

[11] Most essential is the omitting of lines 32-35, where St. John The Baptist, St. Joseph, St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Andrew, and St. John are mentioned.

[12]"Angelicals" stands for all the souls that are saved.

[13]   Praise of the Holiest in the height,
         And in the depth be praise:
         In all His words most wonderful;
         Most sure in all His way!
         (lines 606-609, 638-642, 680-684, 775-758, 801-804)

of the rondo, using the stanza in question as a refrain. Expanding on Newman's text, he also inserts it at the end of the last chorus.

The most important changes appear in the sixth part of Newman's poem, where there are only few reductions (Angel, lines 850-859) but several additions and some very important interchanges. Line 849 in Newman's text reads, "I go before my Judge. Ah...!" This "Ah!" is the only expression of what the Soul experiences at that very moment when it meets the Almighty. Elgar does not use the "Ah," but places here two lines from the first section of the poem: "Be merciful, be gracious; spare him, Lord. Be merciful, be gracious; Lord, deliver him." (section 1, lines 50 and 51). This was the prayer of Gerontius's friends, and Elgar quotes both the words and the music. Yet this is not altogether his idea alone. Newman says in line 827: "I hear the voices that I left on earth," after which the Angel answers, "It is the voice of friends around thy bed." Already at that point, the musical themes from Part I are heard in the orchestra; now (at orchestral cue 115) both the orchestra and the semi-chorus quote from Part I (see cue 35). What could have passed unnoticed to the reader becomes quite clear and obvious to the listener: Gerontius is still dying; all of Part II in the oratorio, in spite of its length, does not take any time at all. Time, as one understands it in earthly relations, has ceased to exist; everything happens at once, in the dying person's eternal "now." At the same time, this insertion strengthens the climax (cue 120) in quite an impressive way.

Elgar abridges the song of the Angel (cues 116-119), and God's appearance (Newman's "Ah!") is made audible by the orchestra alone (cues 118-120).[14] The seventh and last section of the poem is very short. It contains the Angel's short explanation (omitted by Elgar), a prayer of the Souls in the Purgatory (reduced by Elgar to three lines only (1, 3 and 8 of the original text), and of the Angel's final farewell ("Softly and gently," lines 897-912). Elgar adds a choir of Angelicals (the text is from lines 606-620), thus making the end of the musical work more complex. Here, too, the advantage of the musical setting may be seen: different texts may appear simultaneously. In Elgar's case, one chorus represents the Souls in Purgatory, the second chorus and the semi-chorus embody the Angelicals at various distances, while the mezzo-soprano soloist represents the Guardian Angel singing his last farewell to the Soul. The Soul itself is mute now, the last words having been said just before ("Take me away," Newman lines 860-875, Elgar 2 measures after cue 120).

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[14]For a discussion of the musical interpretation of the appearance of God, see below.

One more aspect of Newman's text that ought to be mentioned is its Catholicism. In the context of English culture at the turn of the century, this aspect could be difficult to deal with, especially for the very English, very Anglican ceremonial Music Festival where *The Dream of Gerontius* was eventually to be performed. As a matter of fact, Newman's poem had raised similar doubts once before. Rosa Burley, a close friend of Elgar's, mentions in her memoirs a 1899 conversation in which the composer discussed the possibility of setting *Gerontius* to music. "He was afraid, however, that the strong Catholic flavour of the poem and its insistence on the doctrine of purgatory would be prejudicial to success in a Protestant community. He told me in fact that Dvořák, who had planned a setting of the work for the 1888 Festival, had been discouraged from making it for this very reason."[15] It is possible that awareness of this sensitivity had influenced Elgar's alterations in the text. He did, as a matter of fact, omit the very essential lines of Newman's text:

> The longing for Him, when thou seest Him not;
> The shame of self at thought of seeing Him, –
> Will be the veriest, sharpest purgatory.[16]

This understanding of the Judgment as a self-judgment is essential to Newman's theology.[17] Elgar's omission may be due to the idea of Purgatory, which is absent in the Anglican Church. Similar considerations could have forced Elgar to shorten the litany and to omit the names of the saints in the *kyrie*.[18] Elgar and his friend Jaeger had been discussing the Catholicism of Newman's poem. In a letter of 14 June 1900 Jaeger writes, "There is a lot of Joseph and Mary about the work: very proper for a Roman Catholic lying at death's door to sing about, but likely to frighten some d——d fools of Protestants." And later on: "[...] if, without bowdlerizing a superb poem one can remove Mary and Joseph to a more distant background, it may not

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[15]J.N. Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, p. 291, quoted from Rosa Burley and Frank C. Carruthers, *Edward Elgar: The Record of a Friendship* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972), p. 134.

[16]Lines 745-748 in the text.

[17]See Roman Siebenrock, "Hinüberschreiten – Grenzgänge ins Unsagbare: *The Dream of Gerontius* als Hoffnungsgedicht und als Musikdrama," in Peter Tschuggnall, ed., *Religion – Literatur – Künste: Aspekte eines Vergleichs* (Anif/Salzburg: Verlag Müller-Speiser, 1998), p. 424.

[18]Both in the first section. See above, note 10.

be a bad thing."[19] Elgar answers in the following way: "As to the Catholic side, of course it will frighten the Low Church party but the poem must on no account be touched!"[20] As a matter of fact, he did change the text, and quite significantly.

The Dream of Gerontius:
Musical Style, Background, and Influences

"*The Dream of Gerontius* by Cardinal Newman. Set to music for mezzo-soprano, tenor and bass soli, chorus and orchestra by Edward Elgar"—such is the exact title of this work. Elgar does not label it as an oratorio. As a matter of fact he does not label it at all. Why is this so? One of the reasons may be his deep respect for the author of the text; he, Elgar, only "sets it to music." Yet he uses the term "oratorio" when he writes to Jaeger, who is preparing the catalogue of Elgar's works: "[...]put *Gerontius* in the Oratorio list—there's no word invented yet to describe it."[21]

When *Gerontius* was performed for the first time, it was called a "sacred Cantata." Elgar found this term inappropriate. He writes in a letter to Jaeger dated 4 July 1901: "I say, *need* you call it a *Sacred Cantata* on the Analysis – that is of course the *trade* description but it occurs nowhere on the title I think, so don't perpetuate that dreadful term unless we're obliged."[22]

Friesenhagen suggests that the terminological problem occurs because of the modern musical language used in *Gerontius*, as seen against the background of the English oratorio tradition.[23] Regardless of whether it is in the "Handelian" or the "Mendelssohnian" tradition, an oratorio should consist of separate musical "numbers," and should have a text based on the Holy Scripture. Elgar's approach is quite new, and indeed his musical style is accordingly novel. Elgar's musical ideal is the drama of Richard Wagner; in *Gerontius* he introduces the Wagnerian way of composing to an English oratorio.

[19]P.M. Young, ed., *Letters to Nimrod*, p. 91.

[20]P.M. Young, ed., *Letters to Nimrod*, p 92. The letter is from June 15.

[21]Quoted from A. Friesenhagen, "*The Dream of Gerontius*," p. 39.

[22]P.M. Young, ed., *Letters to Nimrod*, p. 136.

[23]A. Friesenhagen, "*The Dream of Gerontius*," pp. 13-26 and 39-41.

Friesenhagen calls attention to the fact that Franz Liszt's oratorio, *Die Legende der Heiligen Elisabeth*, could have been an inspiration for Elgar. Liszt's work, "Wagnerian" in style, is not based on the Holy Scripture. *Die Legende der Heiligen Elisabeth* had been performed in London in 1886, but we do not know whether Elgar was present at the concert. It seems, however, that he asked Jaeger to send him the music so he could study it.[24]

Anyhow, in an English context, both Elgar's orchestration and his use of "leitmotifs" were new and unexpected. Jaeger was one of the first to see this Wagnerian influence. He writes in one of his letters: "Since *Parsifal* nothing of this mystic, religious kind of music has appeared to my knowledge that displays the same power & beauty as yours. Like Wagner you seem to grow with your greater, more difficult subject..."[25] It is interesting to note that Jaeger's "since" concerns only a span of eighteen years (*Parsifal* having been written in 1882, *Gerontius* in 1900). Elgar himself saw performances of *Parsifal* prior to the composition of *Gerontius*, and even participated as an orchestral performer in one.[26] It is beyond all doubt that it is *Parsifal* that may be heard as an omnipresent frame of reference in *Gerontius*, indeed an issue worth examining more closely. Peter Dennison points out some of those references. Both in *Parsifal* and in *Gerontius* the decisive leitmotif is announced as an unaccompanied melody played by low clarinets, bassoons and muted strings at the very beginning of both works. The Priest, who sings "Proficiscere" (*Gerontius* I, cue 68), is introduced by solemn chords with three trombones and tuba, thus recalling both *Wotan* in *The Ring* and *Gurnemanz* in *Parsifal*. The end of Part I in *Gerontius* with its solemn and sublime march suggests a dramatic and musical affinity with the end of Act I, scene 1 of *Parsifal*.[27] But there are other such similarities. One of the main leitmotifs in *Gerontius*, labeled "despair," sounds like the *Transformation Music* (Act I, cue 88) or the music accompanying Amfortas's "Wehe" exclamation (Act I, cue 102) in *Parsifal*. This is not surprising, as *Parsifal* seems to be one of the most

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[24]A. Friesenhagen, "*The Dream of Gerontius*," pp. 69-71.

[25]Quoted after J.N. Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, pp. 306-307.

[26]In Bayreuth in 1892, he saw two staged performances of the work. He also heard excerpts of it several times: *Prelude* 5x, *Transformation Music* 2x, *Good Friday Music* 2x. Finally, he played second violin on one occasion, in a performance of *Good Friday Music* in 1894. For a list of Wagnerian works that Elgar heard and performed see the appendix of Peter Dennison's essay, "Elgar and Wagner," *Music & Letters* 66 (April 1985): 108-109.

[27]P. Dennison, "Elgar and Wagner," p. 105.

important models for the expression of religious and metaphysical themes in music at the end of the 19th century.[28]

"I am setting Newman's *Dream of Gerontius* – awfully solemn and mystic...": this first mention of the new work appears in a letter to Jaeger dated 5 February 1900. The letter ends: "Now I must go on to my Devil's chorus – good! I say that Judas theme will have to be used up for death and despair in this work, so don't peach."[29] Thus the compositional process had already been going on for some time. As a matter of fact the work had been commissioned on New Year's Day that year, when the chairman of the Birmingham Festival Committee, G.H. Johnstone, visited Elgar at Malvern. An entry in Alice Elgar's diary reads: "January 2. E. sent telegram accepting terms. Began again at former libretto."[30] Elgar started to work the very next day. On January 12 he went to the Oratory at Birmingham—the place where Cardinal Newman lived, and where he died in 1890—to discuss the text with a friendly priest, Father Bellasis. He began the composition still in January and completed it on August 3.

The work seems to be a very personal one. Elgar pointed out that Gerontius is "a man like us, not a priest or a saint, but a *sinner*, a repentant one of course but still no end of a *worldly man* in his life, & now brought to book. Therefore I've not filled *his* part with Church tunes & rubbish but a good, healthy full-blooded romantic, remembered worldliness so to speak. It is, I imagine, much more difficult to tear one's self from a well to do world than from a cloister."[31] He commenced the work with an A. M. D. G. (Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam) and ended it with the following quotation from a poem by John Ruskin: "This is the best of me; for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, loved and hated, like another: my life was as the vapour and is not; but this I saw and knew; this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory."[32] Those two utterances embrace the work, which seems to embody two important traditions of European music: the humble attitude of a musician from the baroque era (like J.S. Bach dedicating his works to God) and the romantic idea of a composer creating unique works of art, being able to interpret metaphysical issues in his art.

[28]Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler II. Mahler und die Symphonik des 19. Jahrhunderts in neuer Deutung* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1987), p. 256 ff, examples on p. 406.

[29]Percy M. Young, ed., *Letters to Nimrod*, p. 77.

[30]Quoted from J.N. Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, p. 296.

[31]Percy M. Young, ed., *Letters to Nimrod*, p. 101.

[32]A. Friesenhagen, "*The Dream of Gerontius*," p. 52.

Musical Signals of Religious Concepts

By virtue of its subject matter, *The Dream of Gerontius* had to interpret, symbolize, and represent many phenomena that are commonly considered inexpressible. In what follows, I will first demonstrate how this is achieved in a variety of musical parameters (thematic, tonal, textural, etc.), and then discuss in more detail one particular instance, the appearance of God Almighty.

1   The leitmotifs[33]

The oratorio opens with a *Prelude* to part I, in which many of the work's important themes are presented. Some of them may be called leitmotifs.[34] In what follows I draw on the analysis of leitmotifs given by J.N. Moore.[35]

Example 2: Edward Elgar, *The Dream of Gerontius*
Leitmotif no. 1 "Judgment," heard at the beginning of the oratorio

The "Judgement" motif falls into three segments, each the length of two measures. The first segment resembles the well-known "Seufzer" motif, a symbol of despair. The motif is ambiguous as far as the mode is concerned, alternating G♯ and G♮. The last segment (mm. 5 and 6) sounds open-ended, as a question without an answer. Using few means, the music symbolizes the main problem of the whole work: the dying person's despair, fear, and uncertainty.

A serious, even depressed mood may be detected in leitmotif no. 5, called "Miserere" and first heard three measures before cue 6, and in no. 6, "Despair" (introduced at cue 7). Both are chromatically descending.

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[33]I follow A. Friesenhagen's list of leitmotifs in *"The Dream of Gerontius,"* pp. 91-100, which in turn builds on A.J. Jaeger, who was the first to list and label those leitmotifs in his "Analytical Notes," published in 1900.

[34]Elgar accepted Jaeger's analysis and the names of leitmotifs. Even so he was a bit unsure, as the following quote indicates: "…my wife fears you may be inclined to lay too great stress on the leitmotive plan because I really do it without thought – intuitively, I mean" (A. Friesenhagen, *"The Dream of Gerontius,"* p. 91).

[35]J.N. Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, pp. 299-314.

Gerontius: Mi - se- re - re

Example 3: Leitmotif no. 5, "Miserere" and its vocal variant

Example 4: Leitmotif no. 6, "Despair"

Rhythmic uncertainty and chromatic procedure manifest in no. 2, "Fear" (introduced at cue 2). The harmonic structure is essential here: the first half of the measure being in D major, the second in A♭ major. The intervallic distance of a tritone (*"diabolus in musica"*) emphasizes the negativity of musical expression.[36]
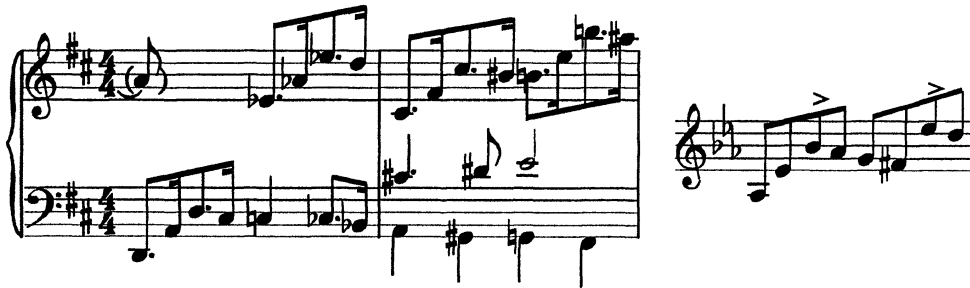
Example 5: Leitmotif no. 2, "Fear," and a later variant

Other motifs represent quite different phenomena. No. 3, labeled "Prayer" (first appearing two measures after cue 2), with its ascending melody has a firm rhythmic structure and is played by woodwinds alone.[37]

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[36]Cf. J.N. Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, p. 301, and C. Floros, *Gustav Mahler II*, pp. 237-245 and 396-397.

[37]J.N. Moore, on p. 301 of *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, thinks that it is a quotation from Elgar's own composition, *Sea Pictures*. I hear some resemblance to the so-called "eternal theme" known by Wagner (Siegfried) and from Mahler's Second Symphony (finale). See Floros, *Gustav Mahler II*, p. 408.

Example 6: Leitmotif no. 3, "Prayer," and variant

No. 7, "Committal" (introduced at cue 12), is a grand melody, solemn and confirming, in which descending tendencies are contrasted by large leaps upward.

Example 7: Leitmotif no. 7, "Committal"

J.N. Moore reads the motif representing "Christ's Peace" as a variant of the "Committal" motif. A very consoling musical gesture, it appears at the beginning of the vocal part, when Gerontius sings "Thou, Thou art calling me."

Example 8: Leitmotif no. 8, "Christ's Peace"

"Sleep," no. 4 (cue 4), combines the inversion of the "Judgement" motif with a variant of the "Fear" motif's accompaniment. It sounds lullaby-like owing to its three-four meter, the persistent repetitions of some notes making it somehow static.

Example 9: Leitmotif no. 4, "Sleep"

Elgar was not quite happy with the label "Sleep" but accepted it in the end:

> I suppose after all "Sleep" will be right – I meant "to be lying
> down weary & distressed" with your poor head buzzing & weak &
> – have you ever been really ill? Sleep will do but it's the ghastly
> troubled sleep of a sick man.[38]

The two motifs important for the music in the oratorio's second half, "Angel" (no. 9, introduced in Part II, two measures after cue 9) and "Demons" (no. 10, first heard in Part I at cue 59), are very short. I hear that of the Angel as airy and light, and that of the Demons (which, by the way, employs the diabolical tritone), as heavy and uneasy.

Example 10:
Leitmotif no. 9, "Angel"

Example 11:
Leitmotif no. 10, "Demons"

2   The keys used and their symbolical meaning

Friesenhagen examines the various keys used by Elgar in *The Dream of Gerontius* and interprets their symbolical associations in the following way.[39] Both halves end in D major, the triumphant key. Part I opens in the serious, gloomy, even tragic atmosphere of D minor, appropriate for the description of the death scene, while Part II begins in the pastoral F major, suggesting a depiction of heavenly peace. In both segments, one may notice similar movements through the key circle, downwards, increasing the number of flats, thus reaching the greatest number of flats at the moment of "crisis." This happens in Part I, just before the death of Gerontius (cue 64, A♭ minor), and similarly in Part II, just before the Judgment encounter (Gerontius: "I go before my Judge," A♭-minor chord with a fermata, three measures before cue 115); Elgar thus creates a parallel between the fear of death and the fear of damnation. The crisis is overcome in both cases with a sharp shift into E major. The keys of the musical numbers after the crisis ascend through the key circle, increasing the number of sharps and ending each time, as already noted, in D major. The Demon's regions are the keys

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[38]Letter to Jaeger, August 1900. See Percy M. Young , ed., *Letters to Nimrod*, p. 101.

[39]A. Friesenhagen, "*The Dream of Gerontius,*" pp. 110-115.

of D minor and G minor, while the choruses of the Angelicals commence in A♭ major and rise up into C major, thus giving the intimation of moving up into the higher regions of Heaven.

We have no evidence of Elgar's own views on the question of the correspondence between harmonic realms and theological content. However, one may note a reasonable accordance of this symbolical valuation of keys with the common understanding of the musical interpretation of Newman's text, as seen in the correspondence between Elgar and Jaeger.

3a Vocal parts: the soloists

There are three soloists, entrusted with embodying the four characters of the oratorio. Gerontius is sung by a tenor (somewhat surprisingly since, as the name indicates, he is an old man),[40] possibly because of the heroic character of this timbre. In Part II, the tenor portrays the after-death aspect of Gerontius, i.e., the Soul. This is a very dramatic part, which maintains a relatively high tessitura and is difficult to sing. It is written mostly as an arioso; only once ("Sanctus fortis," Part I, cues 40-57) does it approximate an aria. The last utterance is particularly dramatic: "Take me away" (Part II, two measures after cue 120). In Part I, when the tenor plays the role of a dying person, the music alternates between short, anxious utterances (the fear of death) and the more confident tone of a prayer. Just before Gerontius dies, he sings a prayer that breaks apart. In the last four measures of the passage built around the text, "Into Thy hands, O Lord, Lord, into Thy hands,"[41] the dynamic level decreases strikingly from a loud *f* (four measures before cue 68) to a *ppp* (one measure before cue 68). The last word of the prayer, "hands," is a melisma on a weak beat, and with this, the hero expires (Elgar marks the last note "estinto"). A pause extended with a fermata concludes this segment of the story.[42]

The second soloist, the Angel,[43] is sung by a mezzo-soprano. In accordance with theological tradition, Newman portrayed the Angel definitely as a

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[40]The Greek etymology of the name refers to advanced age; compare out term for the study of aging, gerontology.

[41]Newman is here quoting Psalm 31:6, which in its Latin wording reads: "In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum."

[42]A. Friesenhagen notes that a general pause, *aposiopesis*, is a symbol of death. See *"The Dream of Gerontius,"* p. 131.

[43]"Angel" is a Guardian Angel and as such has feature of a *psychopompos*, a figure from ancient times, one who accompanies a soul to the netherworld. A. Friesenhagen, *"The Dream of Gerontius,"* p. 79.

male, whereas Elgar interprets the character as female. One of Elgar's reasons may have been that the mezzo-soprano gave him the opportunity for using a contrasting voice. Except for the few occasions when the Angel and the Soul engage in duets, the Angel sings mainly in recitativo style. The most famous passage is the Angel's last farewell. Marked "Softly and gently" (Part II, cue 127), this is a piece of serene beauty, immortalized by the greatest English singers.[44] It forms an essential part of the famous finale of *The Dream of Gerontius*. As Jaeger noted, the finale (Andante tranquillo) is strikingly different from a traditional ending of an oratorio:

> It has a character unlike anything else in music as far as I know. Simple as it is, its very simplicity is its wonder – so aloof from things mundane, so haunting and strangely fascinating... I can imagine how you wish this extraordinary song sung: without any kind of passion & singer's "points," without any hurrying or working up to climaxes...[45]

The third soloist is a bass. A timbre of the most profound dignity, he takes on two minor roles: that of the Priest in Part I and that of the Angel of the Agony in Part II. Both characters appear at crucial places of the score: the Priest just after the death of Gerontius, when he sings his profound "Proficiscere," a prayer offered immediately after a person's expiration,[46] and the Angel of the Agony, just before the moment of Judgement.[47] The essence of both characters is to be helpful: the Priest helps through his liturgical prayer, the Angel of the Agony through his direct relation to the Agony of Christ.

3b Vocal parts: the choir

The choir plays the most important part in the oratorio genre, especially in England with all her "oratorio-hungry choral societies."[48] In *The Dream of Gerontius*, too, the choir plays a crucial role; after all, the work had been

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[44]See, e.g., Kathleen Ferrier and Janet Baker.

[45]Quoted from David Nice, *Edward Elgar: An essential Guide to his Life and Works* (London: Pavilion Books Limited, 1996), p. 45.

[46]The death of Gerontius follows the Catholic procedure, as prescribed in *modus iuvandi morientes*, which ends with a priest's prayer: "Proficiscere, anima christiana, de hoc mondo." See A. Friesenhagen, *"The Dream of Gerontius,"* pp. 83-86.

[47]Here Elgar reuses his "Judas" theme (see note 6).

[48]A. Friesenhagen, *"The Dream of Gerontius,"* p. 13.

commissioned for an important Choir Festival in Birmingham. Elgar in fact asks for two large choruses, which function as turba, representing various groups that take part in the plot: in part I, the Assistants, people assembling around the bed of the dying Gerontius, and in Part II, the Demons, the Angelicals, and the Souls in the Purgatory. In accordance with those changing roles, the choir's singing style varies considerably. Sometimes a small group (referred to as the semi-chorus) sings alone, at other times, Elgar asks for both choirs. The choral part is exceedingly difficult, and possibly an insufficient number of rehearsals was the main cause of *Gerontius*'s failure at the first performance.

It is interesting to note a number of liturgical quotations in the choral part, especially in Part I. The Assistants, a semi-chorus, sing a "Kyrie eleison" (cue 29) with a prayer, "Holy Mary," in the middle section (cue 30). Later on (cue 64), alternating with the whole chorus, the semi-chorus sings a "Litany." The "Kyrie" is a fugue with a theme that may have been derived from the *Officium Defunctorum*.[49] Also the middle section, "Holy Mary," is formed as a fugue. In the "Litany," the element of quotation is stronger yet: the tune is a psalmody for Psalm 129, "De profundis clamavi," from the funeral service.[50] Here the organ joins the choir, thus giving the impression of a church service.[51]

As one may see, both in Newman and Elgar, Gerontius is a "homo catholicus."[52] Correspondingly, his death is framed by liturgical ceremonies. He knows the power of prayer, both that of his own, personal prayer and that of the collective prayer of others.

In Part II, the chorus plays a more dramatic role, which is achieved by means of modern compositional procedures. Here, the section featuring the Demons deserves specifically to be pointed out. When the Soul accompanied by the Angel approaches the regions of Evil (see "Lowborn clods," cues 32 to 55), Elgar had to face the difficult task of expressing Evil in music. The composer solves this by making the Demons appear to be quite

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[49]*Antiphonale Romanum, Rome: Desclée & Socii*, 1949, p. /184/. I am, of course, quite aware of the fact that many versions of the Kyrie begin like this.

[50]*Antiphonale Romanum*, p. /182/.

[51]The inspirational sources for Elgar in using the Gregorian tunes may come from Liszt: one may find such quotation both in *Christus* (1866) and in *Die Legende von der Heiligen Elisabeth*. A. Friesenhagen, "*The Dream of Gerontius*," pp. 69-71.

[52]R. Siebenrock, "Hinüberschreiten...," gives a very sagacious description of the Catholic aspects of *The Dream of Gerontius*.

clever, but "disturbed." He begins with a fugue, but leaves it incomplete ("Disposed, Aside thrust," two measures before cue 36). In it he uses sharp rhythms and unexpected pauses, chromatic procedures (at cue 44), ugly exclamations ("Ha! Ha! What's a saint?"), unresolved suspensions, and metric irregularity. Moore believes[53] that listeners experience the Demons' choir as daring and vulgar. The Demons music represents deformation, lack of order, uncanny feelings of clever malice. The music follows Newman's text and at the same time fulfills the Soul's verbal description: "How sour and how uncouth a dissonance!" (Newman 407, Elgar 2: six measures after cue 31).

In opposition to the Demons, the Angelicals symbolize order, harmony, and beauty. The first choir of Angelicals, "Praise to the Holiest in the height" (cue 61), is scored for female voices alone. Not until cue 69, "Glory to Him," do the male voices join the choir, and the number of parts increases first to nine, later even to twelve parts.

As several contingents of Angelicals commence their powerful climactic ascent, an interesting device may be observed in Elgar's change of meter. Friesenhagen believes to recognize metric symbolism.[54] The passage (see Part II, from cue 74, *Maestoso*) begins in three-four time, changing after thirteen measures to six-four and moving at cue 86 into nine-four time. The corresponding text reads, "O loving wisdom of our God." This change of meter, while not very noticeable for listeners but primarily obvious to readers of the score, reminds one of the same procedures used by J.S. Bach in the last fugue of *Clavierübung III*. Here as there, the symbolic reading is that THREE, the cipher of God, is added on to itself and increases in strength.

4   The orchestra

Elgar uses the large orchestral forces common to all composers in the late 19th century: three flutes (one alternating with a piccolo), three oboes (one also English horn), three clarinets (one also bass clarinet), three bassoons (one also contrabassoon), four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, three kettledrums, several other percussion instruments such as bells, celesta, etc., as well as two harps, an organ, and strings.[55] Elgar's practical experience as a musician enables him to achieve sophisticated orchestral

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[53]J.N. Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, pp. 308-309.

[54]A. Friesenhagen, *"The Dream of Gerontius,"* p. 152.

[55]Gustav Mahler's orchestra is larger; see, e.g., in the Second Symphony from 1894, and especially in the Eighth Symphony from 1906-1907, the "Symphony of a Thousand."

effects. As Floros has demonstrated in detail,[56] for many composers at that time, some instruments have a symbolical meaning. Thus the harps epitomize blissfulness of the heavenly landscapes, the organ represents the Church and faith, while the tam-tam is used as an emblem of death. In Part II, cue 120, the tam-tam occurs when the Soul faces the Divine Judgment, suggesting in this way the Soul's destruction at that very moment. In another instance (Part II, two measures before cue 35), the tam-tam appears at the culmination of the Demon's phrase, "And the Realm of Light," thus suggesting that the Demons actually are in the realm of death.

The orchestra is, in fact, acting as the "one who knows" among all the participating performers. It anticipates, remembers, and comments, adding coherence to the vocal parts, which may appear a bit amorphous in shape. An example of anticipation is the appearance of the Demons' motif already in Part I (cue 59). At this point in the musical development, Gerontius's death struggle is at its climax ("A fierce and restless fright begins to fill the mansion of my soul"). The Demons' motif, appearing here for the first time, accompanied by chromatic, rising motions in the flutes, clarinets, and violas, anticipates what is to come in Part II. What this musical commentary aims to express seems quite clear: to be afraid of death is to endorse Evil; Gerontius is rescued, as shown in cue 61, by calling upon Jesus for help, and it is at this moment that "Evil" disappears from the orchestra. Similar procedures can be observed in the other sections of the score. Elgar himself pointed to one case of self-quotation: Part II, two measures before cue 106 resembles Part I, two measures before 63. In Part I, Gerontius asks for "Some Angel, Jesu! Such as come to Thee in Thine own agony...," and in Part II that Angel, the Angel of the Agony, actually appears. Elgar writes about this in a letter to Jaeger:

> I did not perceive till long after it was in print that (p. 34) "In thine *own agony*" & the appalling chords
> 1   last bar p. 150
> 2   3rd line, bar 2, p. 154
> introducing & dismissing the Angel of the Agony were akin but they are, aren't they.[57]

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[56]C. Floros, *Gustav Mahler 2*, pp. 309-324, and pp. 428-430.

[57]Percy M. Young, ed., *Letters to Nimrod*, p. 102. The graphic set up is Elgar's own.

A Special Case: The Encounter with the Almighty

This extraordinary passage in *The Dream of Gerontius* is indeed a special case in the history of music. We are able here to have a look at Elgar's creative process and to observe an unusual influence on it from the outside. The person who asserts this is A.J. Jaeger who, as one of Elgar's closest friends and his editor, knew the composer's musical style from previous works (*King Olaf* and *The Light of Life*) and his way of avoiding a dramatic climax—an inclination Jaeger had criticized before. The moment when the Soul faces God had worried Jaeger already before Elgar had started to compose the music. In a letter dated April 13, Jaeger writes:

> Like Wagner you seem to grow with your greater, more difficult subject and I am now most curious and anxious to know how you will deal with that part of the poem where the soul goes within the Presence of the Almighty. There is a subject for you! Whatever else you may do, don't be theatrical. But it is insulting to you to even hint at such a possibility. If I did not fear that you might jump down my throat, I would like to make a few very trifling suggestions.[58]

In his answer (April 17), Elgar points out that the musical portrayal of the encounter with the Almighty will not be necessary:

> Please remember that none of the "action" takes place in the *presence* of God; I would not have tried *that* neither did Newman. The Soul says "I go before my God" but *we* don't, we stand outside – I've thrown over all the "machinery" for celestial music, harps etc.[59]

Later on, when Jaeger had already had an opportunity to see the score, he returns to that issue.[60] On June 16 he writes:

> ...Page 159 I have tried and tried and tried, but it seems to me the *weakest* page in the work! Do re-write it! Surely you want something more dramatic *here*!!

Elgar answers on June 20:

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[58]Percy M. Young, ed., *Letters to Nimrod*, p. 83.

[59]Percy M. Young, ed., *Letters to Nimrod*, p. 84.

[60]The following quotations are all to be found in Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 110-112.

"P. 159. You must read the poem; I cannot rewrite his; the Soul is shriveled up & voiceless & I only want on this page a musing murmur & I've got it – it wakes up later – but I can't do this better if I try for fifty years.... I don't think you appreciate the situation – the soul has for an instant seen its God – it is from that momentary glance shriveled, parched and effete, powerless & finished, & it is condemned to Purgatory for punishment or purging – he sighs &, if you prefer it, whines. [...] I can't see how you can ask for the Soul to have a dramatic song here: he is in the most dejected condition & sighs "Take me away anywhere out of sight." No, I can't alter that.

Jaeger goes on pressing (June 27):

Don't think you have convinced me... I *had* read the poem well, *and* appreciated the situation at the end (Soul after seeing God) <u>*well*</u>. But, *surely*, the first sensations the Soul would experience would be an *awful, overwhelming <u>agitation</u>*; a whirlwind of sensation of the acutest kind...a bewilderment of fear, excitation, crushing, overmastering hopelessness etc. etc. [...] Wagner would have made this the *climax* of *expression* in the work, especially in the *orchestra*... I *don 't* want your "Soul" to sing a dramatic "song." Heavens! But what is your gorgeous orchestra for? And why should you be dull and sentimental at such a supremest moment? Here is your greatest chance of proving yourself poet, seer, and doer of impossible things and you shirk it.

Elgar responds on June 27:

I've kept back 159 for consideration but all the time know I'm right & that you're wrong.

To which Jaeger replies on June 30:

I wanted you to suggest, in a *few* gloriously great and effulgent orchestral chords, given out by the whole force of the orchestra in its most glorious key, the <u>momentary</u> *vision* of the Almighty. A few chords! ... and then for a few bars the Soul's overwhelming agitation with a quasi-choked, suppressed "Take me away," *molto agitato*, and then as miserable a whine as you like... No, it need not have been done "theatrically" at all, at all! And to suggest the *glory* of the momentary vision need not have been blasphemous either. But, I grant you, it wanted a Wagner or R. Strauss to do that, nobody else would dare attempt it. No! As I know now, not even E.E.

This seems finally to have affected the composer, for on July 1 Elgar writes:

> Very well; here's what I thought of at first – I've copied it out & sent it – of course it's biggity big...

He then gives instructions regarding the alterations that the incorporation of the orchestral climax made necessary.[61] The essential changes are as follows: the passage contained in cues 118-120 (the orchestral climax) is now added at this time, and the chorus of the Souls in Purgatory, which had preceded the Soul's solo ("Take me away"), now follows the solo. The orchestral passage, thirteen measures only, recalls the "Judgment" theme, based, in the first 7½ measures, on the pedal tone A (strings, organ, tremolo on the kettledrums), which moves upwards, first in two-, then in one-bar progressions, rising from p to ff, suddenly reaching the climax in cue 120. In Elgar's words,

> I will explain the idea sometime — at 120 for *one semiquaver* value ffffffzzzz is the one glimpse into the Unexpressible – then it (the music) dies down into the sort of blissful Heaven theme which of course fades away into nothing.[62]

It is worth noticing, how differently the two men see the problem. Jaeger is the one who takes the initiative. He is the one who insists on an orchestral climax and actually forces Elgar to change the work that had already been written, forces Elgar to make those last minute corrections. It could have been interesting to experience the impression *The Dream of Gerontius* would have made without those changes. Jaeger, an expert in musical questions, is nevertheless not a composer. Being German, educated in Leipzig, his background is quite different from that of Elgar's. It could be that Elgar's declining to write this grandiose orchestral climax can be attributed to his English mind. On the other hand, the Wagnerian procedure, very modern in the English context, was not as modern in the European context any longer. It could be that Elgar was right in his subdued response to Newman's text. It is impossible to say today: the encounter with God in

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[61]These may be studied in A. Friesenhagen, *"The Dream of Gerontius,"* pp. 159-160. His summary is in turn based on Diana M. McVeagh's *Edward Elgar: His Life and Music* (London: J.M. Dent, 1955).

[62]Letter written on July 17; quoted from Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 113.

The Dream of Gerontius is now as Jaeger wanted it to be. Thus Elgar voices the ineffable in a Wagnerian way, using for this purpose the orchestral means of late Romanticism.

Conclusion

The Dream of Gerontius is quite unusual as an oratorio, especially in the English context. It deals with the issue of Death and Transfiguration (the title of Strauss's symphonic poem being quite appropriate to mention in this context).

On the other hand, the work is typical of the period of the late 19th century when we often meet such subjects in the musical works.[63] A quotation from Gustav Mahler may further illustrate this:

> Sie (die Symphonie) muss etwas Kosmisches an sich haben, muss unerschöpflich wie die Welt und das Leben sein, wenn sie ihres Namens nicht spotten soll.[64]

> (It [the symphony] ought to have about it something cosmic; it ought to be inexhaustible like the world and life itself in order not to flout its name.)

Voicing the ineffable seems to be an important issue for many composers of that time. Elgar was lucky to be solidly grounded in the European musical tradition, where such a voicing had obtained a certain symbolic language. As a matter of fact, representing in music the Soul's journey through the different regions of Heaven, even facing God Himself, seems in this tradition quite similar to representing the Norse mythology or ceremonies of the Holy Grail.

"Eine Symphonie muss wie die Welt sein und alles umfassen," as Gustav Mahler said to Jean Sibelius in 1907[65]: to build a whole world by means of the orchestra alone was regarded as quite a usual procedure at the end of the 19th century. However, subjects of vast religious scope seem at the time not to have exceeded what might be expressed within the traditional tonal idiom. That would soon be the case. In 1916, Arnold Schoenberg

[63]See C. Floros, *Gustav Mahler 2*, chapters XXI and XX2, pp. 227-261, with examples from music by Liszt, Mahler, Wagner, Bruckner and Tchaikovsky.

[64]Mahler in 1901 to Natalie Bauer-Lechner, quoted from C. Floros, *Gustav Mahler 2*, p. 111.

[65]Quoted from C. Floros, *Gustav Mahler 2*, p. 135.

wrote an oratorio, *Die Jakobsleiter*, in which the action also takes place in the afterlife—between death and rebirth. By then, the Wagnerian code could no longer be used. This forced Schoenberg to search for a new, as yet unheard music, and to leave tradition behind, as an old slough. But that is a quite another story.

Wordless Songs of Love, Glory, and Resurrection: Musical Emblems of the Holy in Hindemith's Saints

Siglind Bruhn

Paul Hindemith wrote a number of secular compositions featuring saints. Aside from the dubious protagonist of his early one-act opera, Sancta Susanna (1922), he portrayed the Virgin Mary in two versions of the Rilke song cycle, *Das Marienleben* (1923/1948); Saint Antony of Egypt as a visionary impersonation of the painter Grünewald in his opera, *Mathis der Maler* (1935); and Saint Francis of Assisi in his ballet music, *Nobilissima Visione* (1938). In all three cases, the composer introduces the protagonists with an historic quotation: a 14th-century Easter hymn, a Lutheran chorale, and a trouvère song respectively. This essay examines how both the initial choice of the pre-existing musical material and its further development within a 20th-century composition serve to characterize the saintly protagonists, highlight their idiosyncratic concerns, and portray some of their spiritual struggles.

In his earlier years, Hindemith was far from conventionally religious. Especially in the 1990s, he appeared eager to explore ways of shocking any all-too-snug conservatism. When he first set Rilke's *Marien-Leben*,[1] Hindemith had just completed two vocal compositions dealing with women's lives that stressed their sensuality and the price to be paid for it: the song cycle, *Die junge Magd,* and the one-act opera, *Sancta Susanna.* Before this backdrop, it is thus not surprising that he would have conceived his original composition on the Life of Mary as a close reading of the poet's complex, religiously often ambivalent text. This attitude changed quite dramatically in his mid-life years when, as can be shown in the analysis of the diverging musical choices made for the revised version of *Das Marienleben*, he attempted to align his youthful interpretation with a more pious representation of the Virgin's persona and life, one that was in line with devotional literature and Marian iconography. This corresponds with the very different religious orientation evident in the

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[1]My spelling follows the different usages adopted by the poet and the composer, with "Marien-Leben" and "Mariae" (Rilke) vs. "Marienleben" and "Mariä" (Hindemith).

compositions Hindemith wrote during the years of his revision of *Das Marienleben*, in 1941-1947. Considering only the vocal compositions, 1941 marked the beginning of his twenty-year project of thirteen motets on the Life of Jesus; in 1946, he composed the requiem for the dead of World War II (*When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd*, on a text by Walt Whitman); and in 1947, he wrote *Apparebit repentina dies*, a work for choir and brass based on an anonymous seventh-century trope dealing with the advent of Judgment Day—three major compositions on sacred topics. The compositions portraying Saint Antony and Saint Francis fall into the years immediately before Word War II. This invites speculation as to how they relate to the secret conversion that his work catalogue allows us to chronicle from 1941 onwards.

In what follows, I will devote one chapter each to the three saints and the compositions in which they are featured, and then conclude with a panoptic view on the devices Hindemith employs and their musical and extramusical implications.[2] However, before I explore in some depth the signature tunes by means of which the saints are characterized, I wish to draw attention to one intriguing commonality between the three compositions. The song cycle, the opera, and the ballet music all owe their ultimate form to a fascinating series of interart transformations: before reaching the musical level, they each evolved through three layers of artistic representation. This merits closer inspection.

Three Instances of a Threefold Interart Transfer

The plots on which the three Hindemith works we are considering here are built each began as a legendary narrative that was later transposed into a series of visual representations. These representations in turn inspired transformations into the poetic, dramatic, or choreographic medium before they were made to inform the musical rendering. To give the main details:

1 On the first level, there are the legendary narratives.
   • In the case of the Virgin Mary, the accounts contained in the canonical gospels, which give scarce details of her life from the moment of

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[2]Earlier and more extensive versions of the thoughts expressed below appear in my publications, *The Temptation of Paul Hindemith: Mathis der Maler as a Spiritual Testimony* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon, 1998), *Musical Ekphrasis: Composers Responding to Poetry and Painting* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon, 2000), and *Musical Ekphrasis in Rilke's Marien-Leben* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000).

conceiving Jesus (particularly in the gospel of Luke) to her sorrow under the Cross (in the gospel of John), are considerably expanded in several so-called apocryphal texts, among which the *Protevangelium of James*[3] and the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*[4] are considered the most significant.

- In the case of Saint Antony, the principal source, compiled by Athanasius, the patriarch of Alexandria, during the latter years of the hermit's life, and published as *Vita Antonii*, is complemented by episodes in Saint Jerome's *Vita sancti Pauli*.[5]
- In the case of Saint Francis, the main sources for the extensive body of legends are Celano's two *Lives*, Bonaventura's *Legenda Maior*, and the anonymous *Fioretti*, the *Little Flowers of Saint Francis of Assisi*.[6]

2   On the second level, we have the visual re-presentations that stimulated the composer or an intermediary artist before him.

- For the Virgin Mary, the source images are several etchings after the Life of Mary made in the years around 1900 by the German *Jugendstil* artist, Heinrich Vogeler, particularly his 1895 "Annunciation,"[7] which inspired Rilke's first poems from a Life of Mary,[8] twelve years before he set out to compose the poetic cycle that Hindemith would set.

[3]A modern edition of the *Protevangelium of James* can be found in J.K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

[4]Significant portions of the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* were later integrated into the 12th-century "Lives of Saints," Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*. See *The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine*, translated and adapted from the Latin by Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (London etc.: Longmans, Green & Co., 1941).

[5]Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, *The Life of Saint Anthony the Great* (Willits, CA: Eastern Orthodox Books, 1976). "The Life of Saint Paul the First Hermit, by the Divine Hieronymous the Priest," in Charles Kingsley, *The Hermits* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1891), pp. 83-95.

[6]*Saint Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972), and Arthur Livingston, *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis of Assisi* (New York: The Heritage Press, 1965).

[7]Heinrich Vogeler, *Verkündigung* (1895), reprinted in Hans-Herman Rief, ed., *Heinrich Vogeler: Das graphische Werk* (Bremen: Verlag J.H. Schmalfeldt, 1974), p. 10.

[8]Cf. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sämtliche Werke*, Ernst Zinn, ed. (Frankfurt: Insel, 1955-66) vol. III, pp. 463-464, where *Aus einem 'Marienleben'* comprises I: "Verkündigung," II: "Die Hirten," and III: "Ruhe auf der Flucht," and pp. 699-700, where *Zu zwei Blättern von Heinrich Vogeler* consists of I: "Verkündigung über den Hirten" and II: "Rast auf der Flucht."

- In the case of Saint Francis, both Hindemith and the choreographer with whom he collaborated found their visual stimulus in Giotto's frescoes from the Bardi Chapel in the Florentine church Santa Croce.
- In the case of Saint Antony, the composer was inspired to portray his operatic protagonist, Mathis the painter, through the lense of the saint whom the historical model, the Renaissance artist Mathis [Matthias] Grünewald had painted; for this he drew directly on two panels from the Isenheim Altarpiece:"The Temptation of Saint Antony" and "The Visit of Saint Antony in the Hermitage of Saint Paul."

3 On the third level, the three works constitute three different forms of direct or indirect dramatization, with different degrees of participation on the side of the composer.

- Rainer Maria Rilke's poetic cycle, *Das Marien-Leben*, written in 1912 (with no thought of an eventual musical setting), is only indirectly dramatic. It presents a third-person narrative with inserts of direct speech—most noticeably, Mary's and that of the Archangel Gabriel.
- The ballet, originally entitled *Saint Francis* but later renamed *Nobilissima Visione*, is built as a choreographic, i.e. wordless dramatization (by Léonide Massine) on a libretto synopsis (by Paul Hindemith).
- The opera, *Mathis der Maler*, represents the fully dramatized genre. All details of the libretto—plot, dialogue, characters, and suggestions for staging and scenery—are the composer's own.

The Little Brother: Devoted to the Poor and Sick

In May of 1937, Hindemith and his wife were in Florence attending the famous festival, the Maggio Fiorentino. So were the Russian choreographer, Léonide Massine, and his ballet. The two men became friends, spent much time together,[9] and eventually conceived a joint composition. Massine's description of the first impulse for the new ballet has since become famous.

> He [Hindemith] had just come from the great church of Santa Croce,
> which contains the frescoes by Giotto depicting the life of St Francis
> of Assisi. He had been deeply impressed by them, and taking me by

[9]See the chronological account describing the genesis of Hindemith's *Nobilissima Visione*, based on a detailed study of Hindemith's letters, in Andres Briner, "Hindemith's Ballett-projekte zwischen 1936 und 1940: Die Entstehung von *Nobilissima Visione* und spätere Ballettszenen," *Hindemith-Jahrbuch* 1986/XV (Mainz: Schott), pp. 52-69.

the arm hurried me back to the church to see them. I too was struck
by their spiritual beauty and could well understand why they had so
profoundly moved Hindemith.[10]

It was Hindemith who suggested that, together, they create a ballet based
on these frescoes. As soon as Massine had developed original ideas for the
choreography, the two men met again to finalize the libretto.[11] Hindemith then
proceeded to compose both the complete ballet score and a three-movement
orchestral suite using part of the ballet material. The suite was premiered on
13 September 1938 in Venice. It is much better known today than the full
ballet music, a somewhat unfortunate situation considering how much of the
essential musical material it leaves out. Massine also involved Hindemith in
the final choreographic rehearsals, which took place in May 1938 in Monte
Carlo.

The ballet is rooted in a non-virtuosic modern dance idiom. The steps are
stylized, trying to imitate the gestures in Giotto's paintings. Massine describes
what came to be subtitled "a choreographic legend" as "not a ballet at all. It
was a dramatic and choreographic interpretation of the life of St. Francis in
which Hindemith, Tchelichev [who designed the scene and costumes] and I
tried to create and sustain throughout a mood of mystic exaltation."[12]

The music Hindemith wrote for the ballet production consists of eleven
movements, of which several are further subdivided into sections of different
tempi and meters. Four full movements and a section from a fifth have found
their way into the three-movement orchestral suite.

Hindemith has conceived several motifs that recur throughout the compo-
sition. The most prominent, a trouvère song used in the manner of a *leitmotif*,
is the tune that characterizes Francis himself. The composer's musical
representation of his protagonist may in fact have been inspired by writings
of the historical Francis of Assisi. In a text entitled *The Mirror of Perfection*,

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[10]Massine, *My Life in Ballet* (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 207.

[11] In August 1937, several letters go back and forth between the two artists. The question is
first between two plans of which one would concentrate on the miracles while the other
would focus on the life and character of the saint; Hindemith prefers the second (see Briner,
pp. 59-60). Massine also changes the title, for which he had first chosen *Fioretti*, to
Nobilissima Visione; for a later tour of the ballet through the United States, he will change
it again to *Saint Francis*. On 21 September, Hindemith sends his publishers at Schott the
written version of the libretto, which is in German (thus written by him and not by Massine)
and clearly bears the marks of the composer's way of expressing himself.

[12]Massine, *My Life in Ballet*, p. 209.

which is attributed to him, we find the following words: "For what else are the servants of God than his singers, whose duty it is to lift up the hearts of men and move them to spiritual joy."[13] Another reference text points more explicitly to troubadour and trouvère songs while at the same time linking Francis's "singing in French" to two scenes Massine includes in his choreography: his ecstatic make-believe violin playing and his being carried off to heaven. This text is found in an account that fills an entire chapter of Celano's *Vita Secunda*:

> Sometimes Francis would act in the following way. When the sweetest melody of spirit would bubble up in him, he would give exterior expression to it in French, and the breath of the divine whisper which his ear perceived in secret would burst forth in French in a song of joy. At times, as we saw with our own eyes, he would pick up a stick from the ground and putting it over his left arm, would draw across it, as across a violin, a little bow bent by means of a string; and going through the motions of playing, he would sing in French about his Lord. This whole ecstasy of joy would often end in tears and his song of gladness would be dissolved in compassion for the passion of Christ.[14]

In his introduction to the saint, Walter Nigg mentions that Francis "loved to sing his Provençal songs," adding that "poetry was for him a heavenly message which he welcomed in song. He called himself one of God's minstrels."[15] The Provençal songs a 12th-century man from Assisi would have known are, most likely, the songs of the troubadours. These were songs of idealized love developed originally in Southern France, possibly in connection with the Cathars, a group striving for religious renewal through mystical communion

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[13]Quoted as the epigram opening the chapter entitled "God's Singer" in Johannes Jørgensen, *Saint Francis of Assisi* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1955), p. 127.

[14]Celano, *Second Life of Saint Francis* 127, in *Omnibus*, p. 467.

[15]Walter Nigg, *Francis of Assisi*, pp. 27 and 31. The attribute "troubadour" was very closely attached to Francis; see, among many other accounts, Sophie Jewett's *God's Troubadour: The Story of Saint Francis of Assisi* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1957), in which the second chapter, "The Young Troubadour," deals extensively with Francis's enthusiasm for songs of courtly love and chivalry, and the final chapter, "The Troubadour's Last Song," interprets *The Canticle of Brother Sun* as belonging to the genre. How wide-spread the image of Francis as a troubadour was can also be gleaned from titles like that of Henri Queffélec's biography, *François d'Assise: Le Jongleur de Dieu* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1982) ["jongleur" was the word used for itinerant performers of trouvère songs] and Auguste Bailly's narrative about the early Franciscans, *The Divine Minstrels* (London: Medici Society, 1909).

with God and for purification along lines in many respects similar to those the Little Brother advocated. The corresponding songs from Northern France, the poets of which were known as trouvères, were somewhat more formal. A youth from a good family of Assisi at Francis's time would have known both traditions, which had taken root all through Northern Italy.

Medievalists have often pointed at the link between the poetic expression of *fine amour*, refined love, by the troubadours/trouvères and the language of Marian devotion and mystical theology.[16] It is therefore not hard to imagine that after his conversion, Francis would continue to sing in the style of the troubadours, albeit now to a different addressee. Hindemith chose the trouvère song "Ce fu en Mai" ("Ce fut en mai" in modern French; "It was in May").

Ce fu　en Mai, Au douz tens gai, Que la se - sons　est be - - le,　Main
me　le - vai, Jo - er　m'a lai　Lez u - - ne　　　　　　　　fon - te ne - - le.　En

un　ver - gier Clos d'es-glen-tier, O - ï　u - ne vi - ë - - le.　La
vi　dan - cer Un che - va - lier Et　　　　　　　u - ne de - moi - se - - le.

EXAMPLE 1: The original trouvère song, "Ce fu en Mai," and Hindemith's adaptation as a leitmotif for Saint Francis in *Nobilissima Visione*

[16]Bernard of Clairvaux's eighty sermons on the Song of Songs are witnesses to exactly the same kind of blending of spiritual and erotic imagery in 13th-century mysticism.

The first stanza translates as follows:

> It was in May, in soft bright weather; how the season is beautiful.
> I rose early and went to play by a fountain.
> In an orchard, a field of wild rose bushes, I heard a *vièle*.
> There I saw dancing a gallant knight and a young woman.

The remaining four stanzas of the poem, which is attributed to Moniot d'Arras,[17] proceed to talk about the sweet caresses the dancers exchange, their retreat to the flowers for a play of love, the narrator's caution to follow them without being seen, and his sadness over the fact that he has no part in such joy. Eventually someone calls him and asks him to tell his sorrows, upon which he explains that he loyally loves a lady for whom he suffers pain and torment. The gentle couples comfort him and wish that God may bring him the joy of her whom he loves. In the tradition of mystics throughout the ages, the troubadour's love for an inaccessible lady is recast metaphorically as the pious man's ardent devotion for the Virgin and, through her, for Christ. In musically representing Saint Francis—who was adamant that carnal love was dangerous—with a love song of this kind, Hindemith thus draws on a well-established tradition.[18]

In the course of the ballet, Francis's signature tune, the trouvère song, is developed in three very different ways; all of them can be perceived as violations of one kind or another. These involve a distorted contour in one case, a drastically modified rhythm in a second case, and an interrupted and intermittently erased phrase sequence in a third.

The two scenes in which Francis confronts beggars feature an identical motif (see Example 2 below, juxtaposed with the original shape of the tune's opening). It is derived from the opening measures of the trouvère song, which they reproduce in a tangibly diminished version: the five-note ascent begins with a halting note repetition, uses the minor and not the major mode, reaches

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[17]This poet was allegedly a monk at the abbey of Saint-Vaast who later left the Order for unknown reasons. His creative period is estimated to cover the years 1230-1250. For more details on this song see Jean Beck, *La musique des troubadours* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1928), p. 108, and Friedrich Gennrich, *Grundriss einer Formenlehre des mittelalterlichen Liedes als Grundlage einer musikalischen Formenlehre des Liedes* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1970), p. 208. For a helpful overview see Friedrich Gennrich, *Troubadours, Trouvères, Minne- and Meistersinger* (Cologne: Arno Volk, 1960).

[18]The fact that worldly troubadours may have intended a much more literal understanding of their explicit eroticism is no contradiction and does not, in my view, invalidate this specific adaptation of the genre by mystics.

not the perfect fifth but only the diminished fourth, and is complemented by a descent that is not launched joyously from the octave, but appears as if restrained to the initial tonal range. Only the last musical reference to the beggars reestablishes the interval between the partial phrases. In the ballet this is the moment when Massine's Saint Francis, having divested himself of his rich garments, is sheltered among the beggars' rags—becoming one of them and no longer just reacting to them.
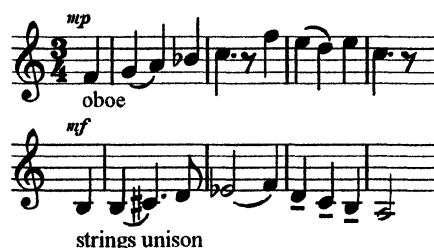
EXAMPLE 2: Francis's despondent reaction to his encounter with the beggars, made tangible in the compressed contour of his signature tune

When Francis meets the Knight (still in the ballet's first scene) and becomes infatuated with the idea of joining him into battle, his reaction is expressed in a drastic distortion of his musical identity: the simplicity of the tune in its modestly regular three-four time is turned into a self-aggrandizing, proud five-four meter with syncopations and great irregularity of bearing.

horn 1 (in F) in B♭ major, later trumpet in E♭ major

EXAMPLE 3: Francis's transient infatuation with the Knight and his armor, as reflected in the warped rhythm of his trouvère song

Later in the story, at the height of the festive evening in his father's house, Francis becomes the focus of attention. As his friends urge him to recount his adventures at war, his signature tune expresses speechless horror, breaking off in the middle of phrases only to resume much later, as if the speaker felt inwardly destroyed.

EXAMPLE 4: Francis, speechless in view of the horrors of war and torture

In this unique way, a tune that originated from a context of idealized love is made to express, in Hindemith's musical representation of Saint Francis (as Giotto saw and painted him and Massine represented him in his dance), all that love ideally would encompass: solidarity with the disenfranchised, compassion and genuine affection for the sick and afflicted, as well as rejection of all cruelty, whether intentional or born out of thoughtlessness. The addressee of the troubadour or trouvère song may be an inaccessible noble lady for the original poet-composer, the Virgin Mary for a pious man, or Saint Francis's cherished bride, "Lady Poverty." In either case, she ennobles the singer and directs his attention away from direct gratification towards the pursuit of a higher communion with all humankind.

Forty-five years after Hindemith's *Nobilissima Visione*, Olivier Messiaen would portray the "Little Brother" on the operatic stage as one whose supreme goal it is to develop the ability to feel genuine love especially for the leper, the most desperate outcast among the sick. To the world, Francis is known as the gentle singer who, in his *Canticle of Brother Sun* (also known as the *Canticle of Creatures*), embraces in his love not only his brothers and sisters in God as well as the birds and all animals, but also Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Wind, Sister Water, and Brother Fire. It seems, then, most appropriate that Hindemith's ballet music should represent this saint as a singer of love.

The Anchorite, Tempted and Vindicated

Hindemith's 1934-35 opera, *Mathis der Maler*, features as a protagonist the religious artist, Mathis [Matthias] Grünewald (ca. 1482-1521). He is the creator of many works of sacred art, among them the famous *Isenheim Altarpiece*, now in the Museum d'Unterlinden in Colmar, Alsace. Few details are known about the life of this artist and his almost eremitic life, and the ostensibly biographical episodes Hindemith includes in his libretto draw on the conjectures of contemporary scholars. Art historians and historians built their theory on two thoughts: that the life of "Master Mathis" unfolded at the time and place of two significant political events, the Lutheran Uprising and the Peasant Revolt, and that he, as one of the most prominent artists at the time, intimate with the circle around the Cardinal of Mainz, would by necessity have been involved in them. From the 1520s onward, following Luther's famous posting of his theses at the church of Wittenberg, communities fighting for the purged faith had begun springing up in many cities. Mainz, where Grünewald worked during those years, hosted a blossoming Lutheran congregation of which the artist is strongly believed to have been a member. The Peasant Uprising, growing out of dissatisfaction and frustration that had accumulated for decades and led to various smaller instances of unrest, came to full force with the Peasant Wars of 1522-1525. In its course, the angry but ill-equipped peasants, supported by representatives from many of the other oppressed professions in the feudal society, were sorely defeated at the hands of the federal army. Historians at the end of the twentieth century see little reason to believe that the artist Grünewald would have taken an active part in the actual fighting. Such was, however, the conjecture in the 1930s, when art historians came up with the theory (since then convincingly refuted) that Grünewald was identical with another "Master Mathis" of his time, who had demonstrably joined the peasants' cause for a period of his life.[19] This was the

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[19]On the theories of the 1930s, conflating Mathis Grünewald with a man who was one of his assistants, Mathis Gothart Nithart, see particularly Hindemith's friend Wilhelm Fraenger, *Mathis Grünewald in seinen Werken: ein physiognomischer Versuch* (Berlin. Rembrandt-Verlag GmbH, 1936) and Walter Karl Zülch, *Der historische Grünewald. Mathis Gothardt-Neidhardt* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1938). For refutations see Hans Jürgen Rieckenberg, *Zum Namen und zur Biographie des Malers Mathias Grünewald: Festschrift für Hermann Heimpel* (Göttingen: Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 36/1, 1971); *Noch einmal Grünewald* (Limburg: Archiv für Sippenforschung, vol. 50, 1973), *Mathias Grünewald* (Herrsching: Pawlak Verlag, 1976), and Wolf Lücking, *Mathis: Nachforschungen über Grünewald* (Berlin: Frölich & Kaufmann, 1983)

information accessible to Hindemith. Consequently, he has his protagonist tackle a crucial question of conscience: Is artistic activity defensible in times of social and religious unrest? "Have you fulfilled what God requested of you?" Mathis asks himself in the opera's opening scene, "Is it enough to create and build? Are you not merely acting from self-interest?" The question is repeated verbatim (and with identical music) by the leader of the peasants a few scenes later.

This dilemma plunges the artist-protagonist into a profound spiritual crisis. On the operatic stage, Hindemith ingeniously dramatizes the plight as a temptation modeled after the one the Egyptian anchorite, Saint Antony, had suffered when he withdrew from all social life to devote himself fully to spiritual exercise and the service of God. Grünewald's painting of this scene, "The Temptation of Saint Antony", is one of the third-tier panels in the *Isenheim Altarpiece*. In Act VI, scene 2 of the opera, Hindemith portrays his protagonist Mathis as "becoming" the saint he portrayed. In the course of this impersonation, he is tormented, in a literal enactment of the depicted scene, by hideous monsters, as well as tempted by all manner of worldly lures. This temptation is both the operatic climax and the allegorical condensation of the spiritual plight thematized in the opera. It is complemented in the subsequent scene by a vindication of the solitary seeker in God's service. The Cardinal of Mainz not only reassures Mathis/Antony that serving God in his art (rather than fighting in the Peasants' War) was good and right, but even scolds him for wanting to second-guess God's intentions for him by questioning the appropriateness of an occupation built upon his God-given artistic talent. The vindication is presented on the operatic stage as a *tableau vivant* of another scene painted in the *Isenheim Altarpiece*, "The Visit of Saint Antony in the Hermitage of Saint Paul,"and thus parallels the vindication the Egyptian hermit experienced, according to Jerome's *Vita sancti Pauli*, when the older anchorite confirmed that his life in silent meditation was God-pleasing.

The two scenes, enacting the corresponding panels from the altarpiece painted by the operatic protagonist's historical model, jointly constitute the focal metaphor of the composition. Just as Saint Antony's life had been devoted to the service of God at the expense of an involvement in the political and administrative or socio-religious issues around him, so also is Mathis's life given to the service of art, praising God at the expense of an active engagement in the religious renewal and the righteous uprising of the oppressed. The "temptation," an externalization of his spiritual torments over the right way to live, is the true subject matter of the opera. Thus, while the protagonist Mathis

becomes Saint Antony only for two scenes towards the end of the work, he *is* the saint's *alter ego* in many respects from the beginning of the opera.

In the music of Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*, the protagonist is characterized, and his plight indirectly represented, by means of a quotation from the body of Christian chorales with which not only Hindemith's mid-20th century audience, but also the contemporaries of Grünewald would have been familiar. The tune is used in the opera like a leitmotif. Its appearances in the overture and in acts VI and VII convey manifold messages. For German audiences, the text, "Es sungen drei Engel ein süßen Gesang," has a history of several centuries. In the ecclesiastic context, it is heard with a melody identical with or similar to the one used here; in the concert hall, it is known above all in Mahler's more recent version.[20] According to the collection of tunes from seven centuries compiled by Franz Böhme in his *Altdeutsches Liederbuch*, the both the tune and the text have been dated back as far as the 13th century: the twelfth stanza is mentioned as having been sung in the battle between King Ottokar of Bohemia and King Rudolph on 26 August 1278.[21] Hindemith not only changed the rhythm and eliminated the repetition of the first line, he also altered two notes towards its end as well as the upbeat to the second line, thus giving the chorale a more interesting, harmonically "medieval" outline.

Es sun-gen drei En-gel ein sü-ßen Ge - sang, daß in dem ho - - hen Him - mel klang.

Es sun-gen drei En-gel ein sü-ßen Ge-sang, der weit in den ho - - hen Him - mel er-klang.

EXAMPLE 5: "Es sungen drei Engel ein süßen Gesang"—
the historical version compared with Hindemith's adaptation

[20]A hint of the chorale is heard in two Mahler works: *Lieder aus des Knaben Wunderhorn* and movement V of his *Third Symphony*. In both cases, only the initial lines of the original text are used, the tempo is swift, the tune entirely Mahler's. All this results in a strikingly different character, with the famous opening lines as the only link to the old chorale.

[21]Narrated in Ottocar von Horneck, quoted in Franz Böhme, *Altdeutsches Liederbuch* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Hairtail, 1877), p. 648. Böhme himself seems to regard this mention of one stanza as a coincidence. He believes that the melody can be no older than the fifteenth century, and maintains that the earliest safe date for the chorale is the *Mainer Candle* of 1605. The original tune, listed as no. 540 in Böhme's collection, is entitled "Alter Ruf zu Christo" (Old Cry to Christ).
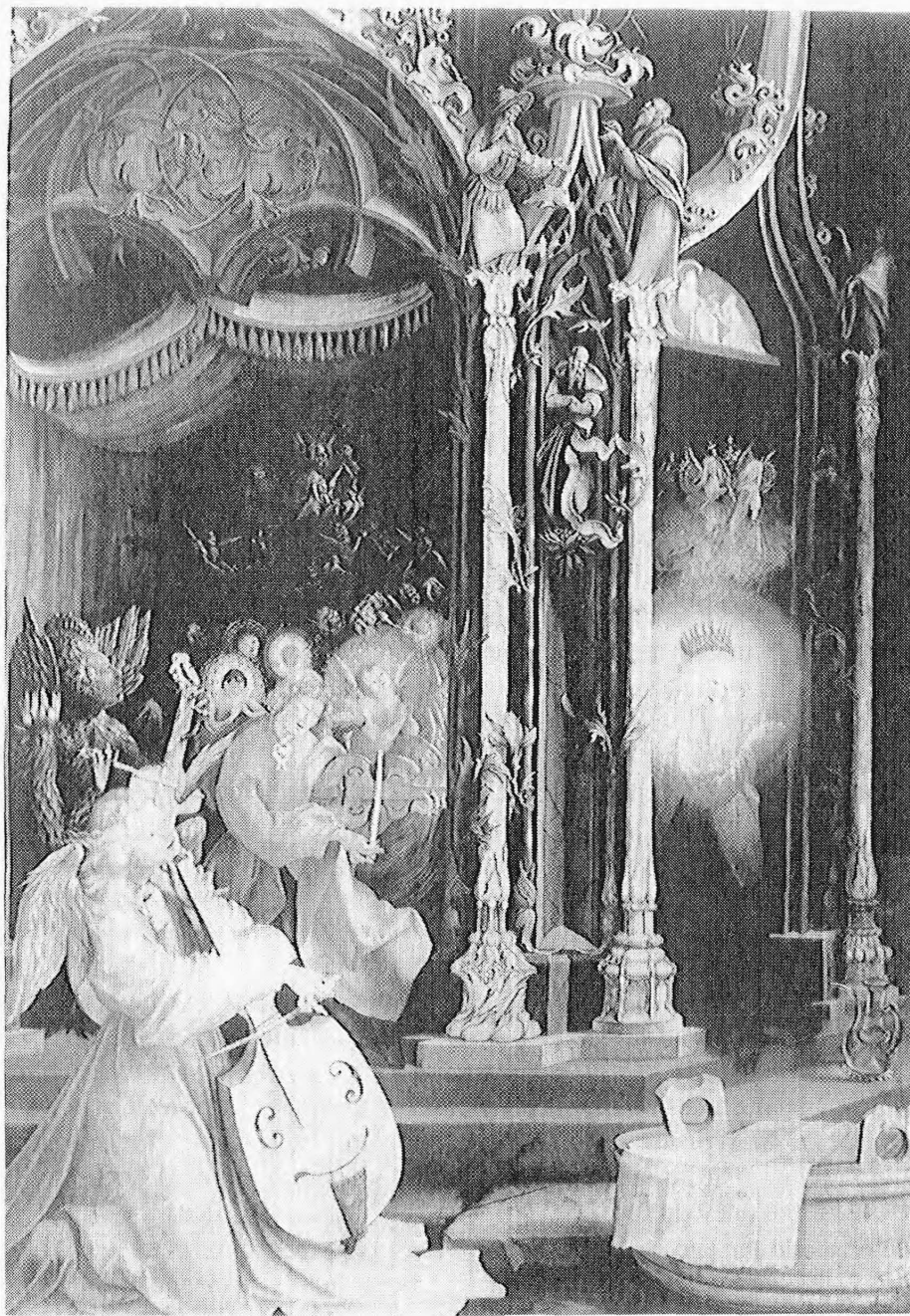
Plate 1: Grünewald, "Angelic Concert," second-tier panel from the
Isenheim Altarpiece, Museum d'Unterlinden, Colmar.

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The allusion concealed in this ostensibly naive chorale is three-fold and complex. On the primary level, that of the verbal statement set to music here, we are to imagine three angels "singing sweetly,"possibly to a harp; this is a conventional-enough image with a long tradition in religious art and craft. On the secondary level, where the opera functions partly as an enactment of the non-doctrinal panels from Grünewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece*, the "three angels" mentioned in the chorale text signal to those seen in one of the second-tier panels of the altarpiece, the "Angelic Concert" facing the Nativity scene. These angels, engaged in a performance of chamber music set in very precious surroundings, are not singing but playing gambas. Their music making is more specifically directed than that of the generically "sweet" angels evoked in the chorale text: it clearly serves to praise the birth at Bethlehem. Finally, on the third level, a yet different but equally specific significance of angelic musical utterances is implied through details of Hindemith's idiosyncratic instrumentation—but veiled in such a way as to be accessible only to connoisseurs.

In the overture of *Mathis der Maler*, the chorale "Es sungen drei Engel" is first presented in a *pp* statement in three trombones. The choice of instruments is symbolically significant. Whereas harp-playing and singing angels, eagerly praising God in countless Nativity scenes through the centuries, do not fulfill truly independent roles, the gambas in Grünewald's panel suggest a music that is an expression of autonomous piety. The instruments thus raise the angelic musicians from the mainly decorative to a status of equality with humans. Angels with trombones or trumpets represent a further step in this direction. They are the enforcers of the Last Judgment, powerful creatures who pronounce their verdicts over human conduct. Hindemith's choice of trombones for the initial statement of the chorale thus establishes, as early as the eighth bar of the overture, a context in which man is someone to be judged, to be found either decent or morally wanting. The fact that the two imitations of the chorale stanza, sounding in increasingly more powerful dynamics, feature horns, clarinets and bassoons in *mp* and then trumpets leading a *f* statement of the full orchestra, reinforces the impression of mighty brass and corroborates the above interpretation.

Yet there is more to the instrumentation of the second instrumental stanza, and it adds significance to the larger context of the musical representation of Mathis and Saint Antony. The particular combination of timbres with two horns, two clarinets, and two bassoons, heard in the wake of the first stanza with its three trombones, brings to mind Mozart's 1781 battle with the court at Munich over the orchestration of his opera *Idomeneo*. Mozart had intended

to use three trombones for the scene in which a heavenly voice absolves Idomeneo from having to sacrifice his son.[22] The three trombones were to be used for that one moment and for nothing else in the entire opera. The implication in that scene can be said to involve judgment in the positive sense of the word: Idomeneo's determined preparations to be true to his vow and carry out the sacrifice he has pledged are acknowledged as proof of his honesty and God-fearing nature. Fortunately, we learn, only this proof is needed and not the deed; the judging voice is thus really the voice of clemency. How important Mozart found the use of trombones as a musical means for allowing the transcendent to speak becomes clear when one reads his extensive and highly emotional correspondence with his father on this topic, in which he furiously raves against the Munich court's refusal to pay three extra musicians for what amounts to little more than a minute of music. Mozart was adamant, finding the sound of trombones absolutely essential for a moment in which higher verdict is given with regard to the morality of Idomeneo's actions. The dispute with the court of Munich regarding the orchestration was never entirely settled; in one of his four manuscript versions of the scene, however, Mozart makes a conciliatory (or practical) move and substitutes the three trombones—with two horns, two clarinets, and two bassoons. This choice of substitution is of imminent significance in the context of the overture to *Mathis der Maler*. It can hardly be regarded as a coincidence that Hindemith, although presumably under none of the restrictions Mozart faced when devising his instrumentation, has the initial three-trombone statement of the chorale followed by an imitation in two horns, two clarinets, and two bassoons. After this, the third statement of the chorale, now in full orchestral force, is lead by trumpets, i.e. by instruments that function as the common biblical alternative to trombones and share their symbolic connotation.

Hindemith's instrumentation is crucial because even for listeners unaware of the connection with the Idomeneo case, the sound of trombones and trumpets—modern instrumental adaptations of the biblical *shofar*—arouses distinct connotations of liturgical contexts, especially those connected with the Crucifixion and the Last Judgment. Through the use of this color in the setting of the chorale, the composer thus defines this opera in general and its protagonist in particular as vitally concerned with the question of morally and religiously right living, with the eagerness to act according to God's will, and with the need for redemption.

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[22]See, in the Neue Mozart-Ausgabe (Kassel/Basel: Bärenreiter, 1973), no. 28 in scene 10.

The initial scenes of, respectively, the penultimate and final acts of *Mathis der Maler* bring us full circle with regard to the quotation of historically pre-existing material into the opera. The angels' chorale, heard in the overture in an instrumental version without words, recurs herein vocal guise. It is sung by Regina, the young daughter of the peasant leader whose defeat and death in the battle fought for the ideal of a better life for all was witnessed in act IV by the operatic audience as well as by his daughter and Mathis. In both the scene of Regina's persecution anxiety (VI/1) and in the scene of her own dying (VII/1), Hindemith has the girl sing the first stanza with words that are closely related to those given in the version from the early 16th century.

> Es sungen drei Engel ein süßen Gesang,
> der weit in den hohen Himmel erklang.
>
> (Three angels were singing a sweet song,
> which resonated wide into the high heaven.)

In VI/1, the composer adds two verses of his own. Of these, the second stanza,

> Es eint sich mit ihnen der himmlische Chor,
> sie singen Gott und den Heiligen vor.
>
> (They are joined by the heavenly choir,
> they perform in front of God and the saints.)

functions as a response to Mathis's description of the angelic concert, and the third,

> Die Welt ist erfüllt von göttlichem Schall,
> im Herzen der Menschen ein Widerhall.
>
> (The world is filled with divine reverberation,
> creating an echo in the heart of all humans.)

reveals the girl's increasing rapture, who is apparently engulfed in the sound of angels and deeply comforted in her heart.

Understandably then, the instrumentation of these stanzas also differs from that introduced in the overture. As Regina picks up the tune towards the end of VI/1, she does so in unison with the "heavenly" timbres of flutes and glockenspiel. The first imitation, in two bassoons, one horn, and the lower strings, creates a contrast both with regard to register and, perhaps more importantly, in that it is tonally shifted from the F♯ of Regina's line to G, from

the "subdominant" realm of insecurity to that of the opera's tonic.[23] Mathis, apparently grateful for the soothing effect his narration about "pious pictures" has on the distraught girl, joins the tune for the first half of its second imitation, in unison with a trumpet, a clarinet, two bassoons, and the violas. When his narration takes him outside the melodic contour, his place is taken by two horns, bringing us ever closer to the instrumentation heard in the overture. The development towards the sound remembered from the overture continues in the next imitation, which features the third trombone in unison with two clarinets and four horns. Mathis, enthusiastic, joins in once more, and the fact that the sentence structure of his prose does not really fit the rhythm of the poetic line very much enhances the impression that he participates in the spiritually powerful chorale tune because he is so gladdened by the effect the angelic music has on Regina. At this moment, Regina sings her second line, doubled in the first trumpet and the clarinets. The rhythm is distorted as though she was about to leave the realm of metric order typical for earthly music. More quietly (both in dynamics and in tempo), Mathis begins the third part of his description of the angelic concert, and for a while the chorale is not heard. When, finally, Regina intones its last line, she does so in counterpoint with Mathis. Falling asleep, as the stage directions tell us, she loses the chorale melody and rises into different realms. Clarinets and, later on, a flute take over, but even they break off one by one, so that the tune is left without its final note—a moving image of Regina's drifting off into what Mathis still hopes will be healing dreams.

When the chorale is taken up one last time, at the end of the first scene in act VII, the symbolism of all musical parameters continues. Hindemith seems to convey here that this "angelic song" is not merely *about* angels, but indeed the song *of* an angel, of a young girl about to die. Once the first statement, presented in its original instrumentation of three trombones with a string accompaniment very similar to that heard in the overture, is completed, there is a small gap in the orchestral flow. Then the second statement sets in. It is just long enough to allow the audience to hear Regina's word "droben," with which she refers to the place where she hopes to recognize her fatherly friend Mathis: "up in heaven."[24] The second statement is not only abridged; even

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[23]On my interpretation of Hindemith's tonal realms as "tonic" (G and D♭, but also B♭ and E), "subdominant" © and F♯, but also E♭ and A) and "dominant" (D and A♭, but also F and B) see my study *The Temptation of Paul Hindemith: Mathis der Maler as a Spiritual Testimony*, pp. 242-243 and 309-331.

[24]"Droben," an amalgam of modern *dort oben* or the older *dar oben*, means "up there."

more significantly, a diminuendo in the second bar leads to a hush, clarinets and horns stop playing, and only the bassoons continue—with, however, a "wrong" (flattened) pitch that is only corrected after an extension of an extra full measure. Just as the world seems thus to be giving way under her feet, Regina finds the strength to sing once more the words (though not the melody) of the chorale's initial stanza, while the oboe contributes the tune as a counterpoint. As she comes to the words "into the high heaven," her voice is unaccompanied except for the oboe, and once again her precognition of the heaven towards which she is heading is fully exposed, preparing us gently for her approaching death.

This young girl, whom Mathis mercifully took in after his ill-fated participation in the Peasant War which cost her father's life, implicitly helps convey the message of worldly temptation and divine judgment. Her ultimate completion of the message with which the chorale is entrusted in this opera occurs conspicuously after the two scenes in which Mathis—as Saint Antony —experiences first the tormenting onslaught of his monstrously embodied self-doubts and then, his spiritual vindication.

The Mother of God, Instrumentalized Yet Resurrected

The thematic material that Hindemith chose for the first *Marienleben* song —which he later employs, as it turns out, as a signature tune for Mary— balances two aspects, the legendary (portraying Mary as the sweet infant) and the doctrinal (representing Mary as the *theotokós*, the destined mother of God as defined in the 431 Council of Ephesos). The first aspect, that of the sweet infant, is musically suggested by the performance indication Hindemith prescribes for the opening song: "Leicht wiegende Viertel" (softly rocking quarter-notes) in three-four time create the impression of a lullaby. The second aspect, that of the *theotokós*, is established by means of the connotations attached to the thematic material itself, in that the principal theme establishes Christ and his Resurrection as the center and purpose of Mary's life. As Hindemith scholar David Neumeyer has shown, the melodic contour with which the piano begins, and which the voice takes up later, paraphrases the opening of a traditional Easter hymn, sung to the words "Surrexit Christus hodie" or "Erstanden ist der heilge Christ" (see ex. 6).

Hindemith may have known this hymn either through Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber, who used it in the context of the Resurrection in his *Rosary Sonatas*, fifteen violin sonatas composed probably in 1674 "for the glorification of the

EXAMPLE 6: "Surrexit Christus hodie"
or "Erstanden ist der heilge Christ,"

(a)   in the version reputedly from the 14th century, list-
        ed in Franz M. Böhme, *Altdeutsches Liederbuch*
        nach Wort und Weise aus dem 12. bis zum 17.
        Jahrhundert (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1877),
        pp. 662-664; no. 554) and Johannes Zahn, *Die*
        Melodien der deutschen evangelischen Kirchen-
        lieder (Gütersloh 1889-1892; reprint Hildesheim:
        Olms, 1997), vol. V, p. 251, no. 8572c;

(b)   as used in the 16th century (see, e.g., Michael
        Praetorius, *Gesamtausgabe der musikalischen*
        Werke XVI, p. 75);

(c)   as used in H.I.F. Biber's violin sonata XI,2;

(d)   Hindemith, "Geburt Mariä," *Marienleben I*, mm.
        1-7, piano treble (section A)

(e)   Hindemith, "Geburt Mariä," *Marienleben I*, mm.
        42-46, voice (section C)

fifteen mysteries from the life of Mary,"[25] or more directly. Both the quotation of an Easter hymn as such, if it occurs on the occasion of Mary's birth, and the possibility of a derivation from H.I.F. Biber's *Mystery* (or *Rosary*) *Sonatas*, are highly significant. The sonatas were among the pieces Hindemith the violinist particularly loved to play. As the archive at Yale University shows, Hindemith gave a lecture recital on Biber there in February of 1942, and Neumeyer, quoting Harnoncourt,[26] confirms that "Hindemith once referred to Biber as the most important Baroque composer before Bach." The choice of the specific quotation, and the context of Biber's work, thus show Hindemith's attitude towards the topic of Mary's birth fraught with far-reaching implications. For as is evident in the *Ave Maria*, recited to the beads of the Rosary, Mary may be the general addressee of the prayers, but the main *subject* in each of the prayer's sections is Jesus. Mary is but an intercessor between the devout and Christ, and it is his life, suffering, and glorification that is evoked in three times five "mysteries."

How does Hindemith's compositional choice reflect the poetic portrayal? Rilke, researching the way in which the Birth of Mary has been presented in words or pictures through the ages, would have found a wide spectrum of interpretations. The various legendary narratives have much to say about Mary's parents: how they led a life of pious generosity, giving away each year two thirds of their wealth, one third each to the temple and to the poor; how they remained without child for twenty years and were shunned in the temple on account of their unknown sin for which God punished them with childlessness; how they were visited, each individually, by an angel who announced that God had heard their prayers and they would have a child; and how, full of gratitude, they pledged that they would offer this child to the service of

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[25]David Neumeyer, "Das Marienleben," chapter in *The Music of Paul Hindemith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 146. Neumeyer identifies the theme in Biber's sonatas as "the violin entrance in the second movement, mm. 9ff., of the sonata 'Die Auferstehung' (The Resurrection), the eleventh in a cycle of fifteen violin sonatas [...] This second movement is a passacaglia in which the theme is the entire 'Surrexit Christus hodie' melody." I wonder why he chooses not to mention the first entry in the bass, which has a rhythmic shape much more pertinent to Hindemith's borrowing than the violin answer Neumeyer quotes. My example shows the bass in Biber's original note values. See H.I.F Biber, *Mysterien-Sonaten ("Rosenkranz-Sonaten")*, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München Mus. Ms. 4123 (facsimile edition Bad Reichenhall: Comes Verlag, 1990), eleventh work ("Jesus, der von den Toten auferstanden ist"), second movement, pp. 48-49.

[26]David Neumeyer, *The Music of Paul Hindemith*, pp. 146-147; Nicholas Harnoncourt, preface to an edition of the Sonata Representativa in A (Vienna: Doblinger, 1977), p. 3.

God. The account of the birth itself, however, is exceedingly terse and unadorned. In the *Golden Legend*, for instance, the entry for September 8, the feast day of "The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary," although altogether eleven pages long, contains only one crisp sentence about the actual birth: "And Anna conceived and bore a girl child, and called her Mary."[27] The *Protevangelium of James* does not suggest any further details either: "And her months were fulfilled; in the ninth month Anna gave birth. And she said to the midwife, 'What have I brought forth?' And she said, 'A female.' And Anna said, 'My soul is magnified this day.' And she lay down. And when the days were completed, Anna purified herself and gave suck to the child, and called her Mary."[28]

Despite the scarcity of verbal sources, many artists throughout the centuries have set out to explore the spiritual designation of the child being born. Italian artists of the trecento often decorated the ceilings of their chapels with a star-studded sky to suggest the heavenly participation in the event, preferably in the form of rejoicing angels. In the German tradition, Albrecht Altdorfer goes even a little further. In his woodcut, *Reigen der Engel* (Round of the Angels, around 1520), he shows the child and Anna, assisted by one helper, in a chapel or church. A host of small angels celebrate the birth of the future Mother of God with a round dance, which gave the etching its name. These cute, decorative cherubs circle in mid-air around one of the pillars above the child's head, perhaps prefiguring the crown Mary is believed to earn after her death. Such an arrangement allows Altdorfer to concentrate much of the beholder's attention on the hovering angel who, in the middleground, is balancing a censer. This large angel meets the child and its mother on their plane. This corresponds with the philosophical rather than narrative presentation in Pedro Ribadeneyra's *Flos Sanctorum*, where the Jesuit writer muses about a saying of Augustine, "that to be the mother of God, is so great a dignity that by it shee surpasseth not only all mankind, but also all the Angels."[29]

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[27]Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, translated and adapted from the Latin by Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (London etc.: Longmans, Green & Co., 1941), vol. II, p. 523.

[28]*The Protevangelium of James* 5:2, in J.K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 59.

[29]Pedro Ribadeneyra, "The Nativity of our Blessed Lady," in *Flos Sanctorum, de las vidas de los santos* (Barcelona 1790), quoted here from the English translation in Alfonso de Villegas, *The Lives of Saints*, vol. 356 of *English Recusant Literature* (London: The Scholar Press, 1977), n.p. (entry for 8 September).

In terms of narrative detail, Ribadeneyra's twelve-page entry on "The Nativity of Our Blessed Lady" is even less explicit regarding the birth of Mary than the other two source texts. Yet he makes up for this disregard by introducing among his pious deliberations about the dignity of the Blessed Lady one truly descriptive passage. It expands on Augustine and regards her incomparability, the fullness of her grace, etc., by referring to the heavenly celebration of her birthday and its effect as experienced by some particularly perceptive humans. Interestingly, Ribadeneyra presents this morsel of pious legend as a third-person account at the second remove, as if he wanted to distance himself from such all-too-tangible imagery.

> Some Authors seeme to say: that a relligious man liuing in contemplation, hard euery yere on the 8. day of September the Angels to make melody and triumph; and demanding of one of them, what was the cause of such ioy in heauen, he was answered: that on that day, was celebrated the Natiuity of the mother of God.[30]

This is the background before which Rilke wrote the fifteen pieces of his poetic cycle, *Das Marien-Leben*, hidden in the sanctuary he had found in the North Italian castle of Duino in January 1912, i.e. a few days before he began composing his later famous *Duino Elegies*. The opening poem, "Geburt Mariae" (The Birth of Mary), which appears couched in the conventional form of three ostensibly regular quatrains and in the conventional imagery of angels hovering in silent praise above a nativity scene, questions both the rightness of what the poet sees as a predestined role imposed without options, and the justifiability of the particular request for purity: to live without fully loving, without becoming fully physical.

> O was muß es die Engel gekostet haben,
> nicht aufzusingen plötzlich, wie man aufweint,
> da sie doch wußten: in dieser Nacht wird dem Knaben
> die Mutter geboren, dem Einen, der bald erscheint.
>
> Schwingend verschwiegen sie sich und zeigten die Richtung,
> wo, allein, das Gehöft lag des Joachim,
> ach, sie fühlten in sich und im Raum die reine Verdichtung,
> aber es durfte keiner nieder zu ihm.

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[30]For the same account, with God's voice appearing to explain why the angels are heard only on that one day each year, see also *The Golden Legend* I, "The Nativity of the Virgin Mary," pp. 524-525.

Denn die beiden waren schon so außer sich vor Getue.
Eine Nachbarin kam und klugte und wußte nicht wie,
und der Alte, vorsichtig, ging und verhielt das Gemuhe
einer dunkelen Kuh. Denn so war es noch nie.

Oh, what must it have cost the angels
not to sing out suddenly, as one breaks into sobs,
since they knew, after all: in this night the mother is born
to the boy, the One, who will soon appear.

Hovering, they remained in silence and showed the way
down which lay, lonely, Joachim's homestead;
ah, they felt pure concentration in themselves and in space,
but no one was allowed to go down to him.

For the two were already out of their wits with all the fuss.
A neighbor came and wise-acred and did not know how,
And the old man, cautious, went and restrained the lowing
of a dark cow. For it had never been like this.[31]

Rilke presents the birth of baby Mary, along with all the human anxiety and heavenly excitement it causes, through the angels' eyes. Even before she is born, they know that she is destined to be the future mother of the One who will come. The fact that the angels are so perceptibly refrained from sharing their wisdom—it costs them much not to burst out into song—speaks louder than any explicit utterances could. Through Rilke's description of the angel's barely maintained silence we learn another important fact, one that is not quite as self-evident in the Life-of-Mary tradition as it might seem. Rilke presents Mary as a chosen one here. The pious and God-pleasing life she will lead as she grows up then merely *confirms*, rather than *causes*, her being chosen as the future mother of Jesus. It is not in response to her great humility and chastity that God entrust her with this role, as the gospels present it when Luke has the angel Gabriel say: "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God."[32] Much less is it a pact sealed only with Mary's submissive consent, as some Catholic interpretations like to see it. In his many poems on Mary prior to 1912, Rilke had repeatedly expressed his discomfort with the

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[31]The translation of Rilke's poem is my own. I am aware that more poetically successful translations exist, but the chief purpose in this study is to allow readers to appreciate the nuances implied in the German wording.

[32]Luke 1:30. This and all subsequent biblical passages are quoted from the International Bible Society's *Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973, 1978, 1984).

conventional portrayal of Mary which, he felt, made her less than human by claiming conception without passion and motherhood without prior woman-hood. Not surprisingly then, in this cycle he acquits her of any responsibility for the projected immaculate conception.

The (postulated) tension between Rilke and Biber, which Hindemith establishes through the choice of the Easter hymn as the principal theme for the Birth of Mary, is very telling. It is the tension that the poet evoked so often, between the apocryphal and the canonical gospels, focusing on the question whether Mary is a woman worthy of veneration in her own right, or whether she is fully and exclusively defined through being "the mother of God." Hindemith's music in the early version of *Das Marienleben* takes this topic as a challenge and speaks clearly against Mary's instrumentalization.

A significant dimension of the principal theme is its tonal symbolism. This aspect, which Hindemith was to highlight so strongly in his later version of the song cycle, also contributes to the subtext created as a counterpoint to Rilke's poetic articulation. "Geburt Mariä," opens with a piano phrase of which the treble is centered in A, while the bass revolves around B. According to the *Marienleben-II* preface, B is the tonal signifier of Mary. The composer understands it as a corollary of Christ's E, of which it is the domi-nant. The angel, by contrast, is re-presented by A, the subdominant of E. The superimposition of Mary's B with the angelic A points thematically to Christ,[33] since it occurs in the context of the hymn, "Surrexit Christus hodie." In the

```
A  ——        ——  B
        \ E /
subdominant          dominant
          tonic
Gabriel ——     —— Mary
        JESUS
```

poem, however, Jesus is mentioned only in the most circumspect manner; as "the One who will soon appear" he is introduced indirectly as the cause for the angels' silent joy. Significantly, the same tonal superimposition recurs in the third song of the cycle, "Mariä Verkündigung" (The Annunciation of Mary),

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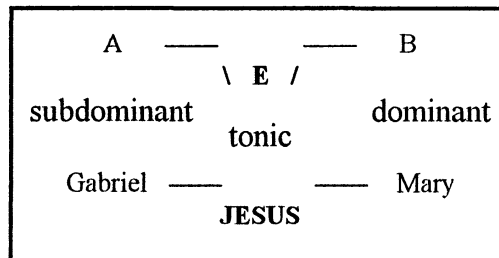
[33]I am arguing here on the basis of a tacit assumption that tonal symbolism informed Hindemith's works long before the time when he acknowledged it and exploited it theore-tically. As I have shown in some detail in my study on *Mathis der Maler*, the composer consciously or subconsciously observed already in the early 1930s what were to become the main principles of his "series-1" organization. The fact that, as Hindemith's own revision report reveals, the harmonic design of many of the *Marienleben-I* songs required only cos-metic corrections in order to fit with the mature composer's plan, corroborates my conjecture that even in the early 1920s, these ideas were already at work more than embryonically.

where Jesus is not mentioned even once, neither verbally nor through musical allusions. Again, the implied tonic points to the fact that this encounter of Mary and Gabriel is indispensably linked to Christ's Incarnation, whereas the music as actually heard underlines the reality, very much stressed in Rilke's wording, that this encounter is about Mary and Gabriel.

Rilke concludes his Life-of-Mary cycle with three poems subsumed under the joint heading, "Vom Tode Mariä" (On Mary's Death). Having explored the scene of her dying (the "Dormition," going back to Byzantine iconography) in the first and her Assumption to and arrival in heaven in the second poem, Rilke seems to end on a light note when he presents the third as a genre scene at the empty grave. The encounter between the doubting Thomas and the angel who, anticipating this late-comer's questions, is well prepared to furnish convincing evidence for Mary's bodily ascension to heaven, is poetically cast as a parallel to the meeting between the angel with another doubting man earlier in the cycle, the suspicious Joseph. In both scenes, the angel proceeds with very pragmatic evidence; also in both cases, the humbled man ends by expressing his conversion in song. The originally angry Joseph, intimidated after the angelic scolding, tips off his cap and "sings praise"; the incredulous apostle Thomas is left with the command to kneel down and do the same.

> Doch vor dem Apostel Thomas, der
> kam, da es zu spät war, trat der schnelle
> längst darauf gefaßte Engel her
> und befahl an der Begräbnisstelle:
>
> Dräng den Stein beiseite. Willst du wissen,
> wo die ist, die dir das Herz bewegt:
> Sieh: sie ward wie ein Lavendelkissen
> eine Weile da hineingelegt,
>
> daß die Erde künftig nach ihr rieche
> in den Falten wie ein feines Tuch.
> Alles Tote (fühlst du), alles Sieche
> ist betäubt von ihrem Wohl-Geruch.
>
> Schau den Leinwand: wo ist eine Bleiche,
> wo er blendend wird und geht nicht ein?
> Dieses Licht aus dieser reinen Leiche
> war ihm klärender als Sonnenschein.
>
> Staunst du nicht, wie sanft sie ihm entging?
> Fast als wär sie's noch, nichts ist verschoben.
> Doch die Himmel sind erschüttert oben:
> Mann, knie hin und sieh mir nach und sing.

No. 1, "Geburt Mariä," mm. 1-7

No. 15,"Vom Tode Mariä III," mm. 1-3

EXAMPLE 7: The apostle Thomas, at Mary's grave,
hears an allusion to her birth

But striding forth before Thomas the Apostle,
who arrived when it was too late, was the swift
angel who had long been prepared for this,
and commanded at the tomb:

Push the stone aside. Do you wish to know
where she is, who has so moved your heart:
Behold, like a pillow of lavender she was
laid in there for a short while,

so that the earth might smell, in time to come,
of her among its folds, like an elegant shawl.
All that's dead (you feel it), all that's withering
is anesthetized by her pleasant fragrance.

Behold the linen shroud! Where is there a bleach
that without shrinkage yields such dazzling white?
This light streaming from the immaculate corpse
was for it more purifying than sunlight.

Do you not marvel how quietly she left it?
You'd think her still here, nothing is disarranged.
Yet the heavens up high are deeply moved.
Man, kneel down, gaze after me, and sing.

Hindemith does not follow the lead provided in the correspondence of the two poetic scenes; his music for the third scene representing Mary's death does not take up any of the picturesque devices employed in "Argwohn Josephs" (Joseph's Suspicion). Instead, he conceives this final song, in which Mary's death is contemplated and commented upon in her absence, as a counterpart to the initial song in the cycle, "Geburt Mariä." Correspondingly, he designs a musical piece framed by recurring sections based on a phrase which, in its texture and the stepwise circling of its contour, is reminiscent of the Resurrection hymn in the song about Mary's birth (Example 7 above).

The repeated contrasting section, setting lines 7-12 and 13-18 of the poem, is presented in *Marienleben I* with a recurring motif that does not refer back to any material previously introduced in the cycle. In *Marienleben II*, by contrast, the same sections are opened with, in the piano's right hand, a quotation of the complete phrase of "Surrexit Christus hodie" (from m. 23) and its embellished variation (from m. 43, see ex. 8 below). This time, Hindemith recalls not the texture but only the melodic contour, which he sets hemiolically, with two three-four measures against each three-two measure in the voice.

EXAMPLE 8: The angel's joy—
Mary has ascended to heaven, *Surrexit Christus hodie*

The use of these two components, both individually and in conjunction, is highly symbolic. On the one hand, the composer alludes with the device of this quotation to the symmetric events and locales in Mary's life—the nativity chamber in her parents' homestead before she arrived in this world and her grave after she left—events one hears Hindemith celebrating with the same music. Furthermore, there is the hymn text itself and its connotation, which plays into the message. The Vatican, embarrassed by continuing questions of the devotees of the Virgin Mary, had refused for the longest time to take a

stand on the issue of the nature of her ascent to heaven; only in 1950 did a pope finally yield and dogmatize Mary's bodily Assumption.[34] When the mature Hindemith decided to conclude his revised *Marienleben* with the Resurrection hymn, he may have wanted to take the opportunity, in the midst of an otherwise very anecdotal and slightly humorous context, to make a final pious statement about the heavenly abode of the Mother of God.

And yet, Hindemith presents the Easter hymn with a specific musical feature, the overlay of different metric realities. Hemiolas of the same kind, with three half-note beats in the vocal part superimposed over two three-four measures in the piano, were heard prominently in the cycle's second song, "Darstellung Mariä im Tempel" (The Presentation of Mary in the Temple), where they depict the grandeur of Mary's initiation into what is not merely her maidenly service in the temple, but her destiny. Hindemith's decision to allude with this metric device to yet another earlier song in the cycle layers this final piece in complex ways that are not prefigured in the poem. While Rilke keeps Thomas and the angel firmly on the ground and speaks of Mary's Assumption in the language of scents and colors, Hindemith invites us to imagine her once more ascending the steps towards the terrestrial altar and, by extension, those that lead up to the heavenly temple.

When Hindemith chose, for the first song in his *Marienleben*, the tempo and meter of a lullaby and the thematic material of a Resurrection hymn, he captured two aspects of the baby to be born. The first is a charming detail of the nativity scene which, traditionally (though not in Rilke), is depicted with a cradle that is rocked by either the mother or a servant. The second is the fearful perspective that this infant, not even born yet, is greeted (as Rilke has the angels do) as the future mother not only of the One who in his turn will be born about fifteen years from now, but as the mother of a son who will be crucified and resurrected, another thirty-three beyond that. This interpretive omniscience would seem rather problematic, a fact that the serene hymn tends to make listeners forget. When Hindemith inserts the Resurrection hymn in his revision of no. 15, "Vom Tode Mariä III," he suggests not merely that the scene following Mary's burial and the one preceding her birth are symmetric events. More significantly, he invites us to hear Rilke as making a statement about Mary's bodily resurrection, thus elevating her to a rank equal to that of Jesus.

[34]For more on the background of the struggle the Catholic authorities fought over this issue, see Gertrud Schiller, *Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1980), vol. 4/2, "Maria," pp. 89-92.

Hindemith's Devices: Transformations and Signals

As promised, I turn now to the surprising commonalities between the three compositions that appear, at least at first inspection, so very different: the song cycle (in its dual incarnation), the opera, and the ballet music.

The three works share a surprising number of characteristics. They each explore crucial traits and conflicts of a saint in the context of a distinctly secular composition: the Virgin Mary is the subject matter of a song cycle for soprano and piano, the Egyptian hermit Saint Antony is represented in an opera as the *alter ego* of the protagonist, the artist who painted him, and Saint Francis of Assisi is portrayed in a ballet. Also, as I have shown in detail earlier in this essay, all three compositions owe their existence to an intriguing series of interart transformation, whereby three layers of artistic representation precede the musical creation. Finally, each of the three musical portrayals in its diverse secular medium draws prominently on pre-existing thematic material, quoting an entity that is not only firmly linked to a vocal text but stems from a religious tradition: a hymn (about Christ's Resurrection), a chorale (about angels sweetly singing their praise to the Lord), and a trouvère song (about love for an inaccessible lady, in the beautiful month of May).[35]

As I have shown, the wording associated with each of these quotations is essential for a full understanding of the allusion Hindemith's music creates. It seems equally significant, though, that the further development of the musical inset—a development in purely musical terms but related to new contexts as understood in relation to the progression of the plot—transcends the source context. The newly established context sheds on the saints thus portrayed a light owed uniquely to Hindemith's idiosyncratic interpretation.

The chorale "Es sungen drei Engel ein süßen Gesang" is the most indirect example. With regard to its original verbal text, it characterizes not Mathis or Saint Antony but angels—admittedly soon associated with the three angelic musicians in one of the panels of Mathis Grünewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece* and thus by extension related to the saint in whose honor this altarpiece was devised, the Egyptian anchorite Antony. With regard to the only person who

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[35]I owe thanks to my Danish friend and colleague, Eva Maria Jensen, for reminding me that in Liszt's oratorio, *The Legend of Saint Elizabeth* (published 1867/1869), the saint is also represented by means of a quotation used as a leitmotif. In contrast to Hindemith, however, Liszt takes his inspiration from a context intricately linked with the saint he is portraying when he adapts a plainchant habitually sung on occasion of the feat of St. Elizabeth. What makes Hindemith's three quotations so noteworthy is that none of them is self-evidently connected with the person it comes to signify.

is entrusted with the original lyrics in the opera, the chorale is recast as an emblem of the dying young girl Regina whom Mathis had adopted as a foster child after her father's death in battle. Yet there again, the "angelic" girl sings her tune in response to Mathis's description of the "pious picture" he has painted, the altar panel showing the Angelic Concert, and thus brings the association back to the artwork and its dedicatee, Saint Antony. On the level of purely musical parameters, however, the composer creates the connection to the implicit, spiritual subject matter of the opera. By defining the angels on repeated occasions through the timbres employed by the messengers of the Last Judgment, Hindemith draws the listeners attention to the dilemma shared by the Gothic painter and his Egyptian model: Is it enough to praise God in solitary withdrawal, through silent prayer (Antony) or the creation of pious pictures (Mathis)? This vital question, ultimately answered affirmatively for Antony (according to Saint Jerome) and for Mathis (according to Hindemith's libretto), is one that the "sweetly singing" and gamba-playing angels are musically suggested to raise before divine judgment.

The trouvère song featured as the principle theme in Hindemith's ballet about the "most noble vision" characterizes the humble saint from Assisi in myriad ways. By its genre, it complements and layers the visual (danced) enactment of the saint's story in three ways. First, it reminds beholders of the ballet of that aspect which the silent dancer cannot show but without which Saint Francis would not be truly himself: his love for singing and, specifically, his enthusiastic singing to his brothers and sisters across God's Creation, in his famous *Canticle of Creatures*. Second, the song suggests the main topic explicitly addressed in all troubadour lyric, the devotion to an inaccessible, most noble lady. In the tradition of monastic adaptations of troubadour songs, this lady is conventionally identified as the Virgin Mary; additionally, in the particular story represented here, the allusion may be extended to Francis's equally praised (and metaphorically wedded) "Lady Poverty." Third, the implicit topic of troubadour and trouvère singing, a religious elevation through the praise of idealized Love, covers many further concerns expressed by the "Little Brother" from Assisi. On the purely musical level, Hindemith's intricate transformations of the melodic contour in the course of the different scenes of the ballet explore this last aspect in considerable depth, demonstrating Saint Francis's all-embracing love, especially that for his less fortunate brothers and sisters, and his horror and profound distress at the sight of thoughtless and wanton cruelty.

In the case of Mary, the hymn associated with her from the moment before her birth onwards and thus defining already the infant in relation to the Resurrection of her son forty-eight years later, originally appears to perpetuate the instrumentalization of the female in centuries of Church history, denying Mary the right to be perceived, at the very least *until* her son is born, as a saintly, God-pleasing person in her own right. Hindemith's choice of the musical quotation corresponds with Rilke's subtly ironic mention of angelic praise for "the mother [who] is born to the boy, the One, who will soon appear." The tonal setting Hindemith chooses for the hymn, which relates both the angels' A and Mary's B to an implicit tonic E that will conspicuously not appear until song no. 7, gives a first hint of an analogous musical irony. The very prominent recurrence of the Resurrection hymn in the revised version of the final song about the doubting Thomas at Mary's empty grave captures two aspects of an angle that the mature Hindemith was eager to stress. As the piano part seems to declare for all to hear, Mary, like her son before her, is risen to heaven. Hence, "Surrexit Maria hodie" or "Erstanden ist die heilge Magd," one is tempted to substitute for the original words of the tune.

The Passion According to Penderecki

Danuta Mirka

During Lent 1966, the Gothic cathedral in the German city of Münster celebrated its 700th anniversary with the premiere of a newly composed work, the *St. Luke Passion* by the Polish composer, Krzysztof Penderecki (born 1933). The great success this work enjoyed both with the reviewers and with the audience, and its subsequent triumphant march through the most illustrious cultural centers of Europe, both Americas, and Japan, was an event unprecedented in the history of the musical avantgarde.[1]

Passio et Mors Domini Nostri Iesu Christi secundum Lucam holds a privileged position also within the output of Penderecki, marking as it does the place where two streams of his earlier music meet. These two streams are based on different compositional techniques: the sonoristic technique, employed in his instrumental compositions, and the twelve-tone technique, which he preferred when writing vocal works. These two techniques are here combined yet not intermingled, as they form methods of musical setting employed in two distinct plans of the *Passion*: the PLAN OF ACTION and the PLAN OF PRAYER.

The PLAN OF ACTION

The PLAN OF ACTION, which contains the report of the dramatic events of Good Friday as they are described in the Gospel of St. Luke, is set in Penderecki's original technique, the one he elaborated in his orchestral pieces of the so-called "sonoristic" period (1960-1962). A peculiarity of this technique is that its basic concept is not a single sound, but the sound matter taken as a whole. Distinct states of the sound matter are governed by a few categories underlying the sonoristic technique of composition, which assume the shape of binary oppositions:

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[1]In the course of the years 1967-70, Penderecki's *Passion* had almost seventy performances all over the world. See Ludwik Erhardt, *Spotkania z Krzysztofem Pendereckim* (Cracow: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1975), p. 91.

spatial continuity vs. discontinuity
spatial mobility vs. immobility
temporal continuity vs. discontinuity
temporal mobility vs. immobility
high vs. low register
loud vs. soft dynamics

Opposition between spatial continuity and spatial discontinuity denotes a relation between frequency bands and individually discernible pitches. Temporal continuity vs. discontinuity describes an opposition between lasting sounds and momentary impulses. Spatial mobility means a perception of pitch change, and temporal mobility is tantamount to rhythm in traditional musicological terminology.[2]

The characteristics implied by the opposite terms of individual categories are such that they require these terms to be represented by sets of sounds—sound fields or masses—which thus constitute elementary segments of sonoristic compositions.[3] In order to obtain these characteristics, the composer devises numerous unusual sound effects such as clusters, glissandi, atypical playing techniques, and aleatoric play characterized by indefinite time relations between individual sounds. The striking effect the sonoristic technique has on listeners lies in the abrupt clashes of segments containing different sound effects and hence contrasting as to their register, dynamics, and texture. It is customarily believed that in the PLAN OF ACTION of the *St. Luke Passion*, these clashes serve as illustrations of the sounds accompanying the Passion of Christ: screams, cries of the crowd, blows and hits, struggle. Such a view is, however, entirely mistaken, since it does not take into account the expressive value of Penderecki's sonoristic technique.

Initially, expression was of no interest for the Polish composer, his exclusive focus of attention being the technique itself, with expression merely its side-effect. That the young Penderecki in fact held this aesthetic position is confirmed in the very abstract titles chosen for his early pieces,

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[2]For a detailed discussion of Penderecki's sonoristic technique see Danuta Mirka, *The Sonoristic Structuralism of Krzysztof Penderecki* (Katowice: Akademia Muzyczna, 1997) or, in an abridged version, "Texture in Penderecki's Sonoristic Style," *Music Theory Online* 6/1 (2000), <http://smt.ucsb.edu/mto/mtohome.html>.

[3]Even though there occasionally occur segments consisting of single sounds, they are to be treated as liminal cases of segments, in the same way as a set containing only one element forms a liminal set.

in which the sonoristic technique was first developed: *Anaklasis* (1959-60), *Dimensions of Time and Silence* (1960-61), *Polymorphia* (1961), *Fono-grammi* (1961), *Fluorescences* (1962), and *Canon* (1962). As stated at the outset, almost all of these pieces were instrumental. Only *Dimensions of Time and Silence* used a mixed choir, yet without providing its part with any literary text.[4] The only wording to stray from the indifferent technicality of the other titles is the famous *Threnody—To the Victims of Hiroshima* (1960). It is an open secret that this title as well as the telling dedication came from Roman Jasiński, at the time the director of the Polish Radio, who suggested it to Penderecki before submitting the composition to the UNESCO International Tribune of Composers in 1961. The original title the composer had given the piece was the mere description of playing time: *6'37"*. That Penderecki accepted the new title, however, was the first sign of his having discovered the deep emotional impact of the sonoristic technique.

Indeed, the maximal tensions arising as a result of the binary oppositions and manifesting themselves in abrupt shifts between contrary states of the sound matter can be easily comprehended as musical correlates of irrational shifts of a psyche tossing between opposite emotional states: between horror and stupor, euphoria and apathy, torment and assuagement. Such emotional shifts are characteristic for pathologically neurotic states caused either by mental disease or by prolonged fear and pain. Interestingly, these two topics—of insanity and of martyrdom—dominated subsequent pieces of Penderecki, who from now on found himself motivated by literary texts or dramatic action. After *Threnody* and before the *Passion* Penderecki wrote *The Death Squad* (1963), a startling composition based on the diary of Leon Weliczker, a Jewish prisoner in Auschwitz.[5] Another piece related

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[4]The first version of *Dimensions*, performed during the 4th International Festival of Contemporary Music "Warsaw Autumn" in 1960, included the text of the well-known magic square characterized by unique formal properties:

S	A	T	O	R
A	R	E	P	O
T	E	N	E	T
O	P	E	R	A
R	O	T	A	S

Yet this text was removed from the final version of the piece, published in 1962, in which the choral part is based exclusively on meaningless sequences of consonants and vowels.

[5]Weliczker was a member of *Sonderkommando 1005*, a special squad whose task was to burn the corpses of the prisoners. The recitation of his drastic and unimpassioned account, accompanied by Penderecki's tape music, when presented during a concert aroused highest disgust among the reviewers. As a reaction to their protests, the composer decided to withhold the piece (see Erhardt, *Spotkania z Krzysztofem Pendereckim*, pp. 60-61).

to the tragedy of Auschwitz is *Dies irae* (1967), an oratorio written soon after the *Passion*. Written about the same time, Penderecki's first opera, *The Devils of Loudun* (1969), with its spectacular scene of the nuns' demoniacal possession, is related to the topic of insanity. From this consideration it should be clear that, when using the sonoristic technique in the action plan of the *St. Luke Passion*, Penderecki attributes the neurotic state of mind to its subject, the suffering Jesus. If one can speak of any onomatopoeia here, the illustrated sounds are not exactly the noises accompanying the Passion of Christ, but rather their perception by the tortured psyche of the victim. By using the sonoristic technique in the action plan of the *St. Luke Passion*, Penderecki shows the martyrdom of Christ from inside, as it were, as seen with Christ's own eyes. In this sense Penderecki's *Passion*— although nominally according to St. Luke—can be said rather to be a Passion according to Jesus Christ.

This interpretation of the piece is first attested to by the fact that the part of the Evangelist is not sung here but spoken, whereby the Evangelist —as the external observer and narrator of the Passion drama—is virtually placed outside the musical narration. Penderecki had applied such setting of the part of the narrator, which he conceived no doubt under the influence of radio plays, already earlier, in *The Death Squad* on Weliczker's diary, a piece commissioned by the Polish Radio and composed in the Experimental Studio of the Polish Radio in Warsaw.[6] Characteristically, *The Death Squad* was designated by the composer explicitly as a radio play. In the *St. Luke Passion*, the part of the Evangelist is entrusted to a reciting male voice though occasionally turned over to the three mixed choirs that form part of the performing forces in this piece and are requested to deliver these lines *raccontando*. The effect resulting from this manipulation resembles a running commentary given straight from the thick of the fray,[7] and the part of the Evangelist can be compared with a narration of a reporter: animated,

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[6]Penderecki's contact with the Experimental Studio of the Polish Radio dates back to 1959, when he participated in a seminar for composers organized there by Józef Patkowski, the director of the Studio. In the following years Penderecki visited the Studio mostly to prepare music for film, theater, and puppet shows. This almost unknown part of his output contains more than sixty titles. See Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Krzysztof Penderecki i jego muzyka* (Cracow: Akademia Muzyczna, 1994), pp. 123-126.

[7]The first to draw attention to the association of this setting with a running commentary was Andrzej Kijowski, "Próby czytane. Słuchając *Pasji* według Pendereckiego," *Dialog* 1 (1967): 112-115 [115]. The observation was later repeated by Erhardt, *Spotkania z Krzysztofem Pendereckim*, p. 84.

emotional, occurring against a background of surrounding noises. In turn, the narration in the choirs arouses associations with the feverish report of witnesses called by the reporter to the microphone, adding to his commentary from behind his back, even outshouting him as well as one another in a frenzy of excitement. This is particularly striking at those moments of the *St. Luke Passion* when the narration in the part of the Evangelist overlaps with those delivered by the choirs, as happens in the scenes portraying the capture (35)[8] and the trial of Pilate (46), when excited and impatient witnesses anticipate the further course of the reporter's account. The effect of a live report is further heightened through other cases of overlap, with the result that the events of the Passion occasionally follow one another in rapid succession independently of the Evangelist's narration, as in the scene of Peter's triple denial (18). This is more evidence that in the *St. Luke Passion*, the composer treats the Evangelist not as the actual subject delivering the report, but employs him only insofar as it is indispensable in order that this report may remain comprehensible. For obvious reasons, the instrumental background of the narrative parts is very thin so as not to drown out the text. Quite often, the narration of the reciting voice is devoid of any musical background. In the most cases, however, it is accompanied by discreet yet suggestive sonoristic effects: protracted sounds or clusters that create very strong tension—the classical suspense of horror shows and movies, but also used in the avantgarde films of which Penderecki was an ardent admirer.[9]

Owing to their employment in the narration of the *St. Luke Passion*, the mixed choirs perform a dual role in the PLAN OF ACTION: that of participants in the Passion events, represented in the direct speech of the *turba* sections, and that of witnesses, portrayed in the narrative sections. Particularly interesting are instant switches between these two roles. These happen twice in the course of the piece: first in the scene when Jesus is mocked on the Cross [21 D], and then again during the dialogue with the

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[8]Throughout this essay, numbers and capital letters given in square brackets refer to rehearsal numbers and letters in the score of the *St. Luke Passion*. Numbers in parentheses designate measures within individual scenes, counted from the preceding rehearsal numbers. The rehearsal numbers opening individual scenes of the PLAN OF PRAYER are indicated in Table 1.

[9]In the 1950s and 60s Penderecki, at the time a frequenter of Cracow cinemas, followed zealously the most recent output of the avantgarde film artists such as Bergman, Fellini, Antonioni. See Przemysław Ćwiklinski and Jacek Ziarno, *Pasja: O Krzysztofie Pendereckim* (Warsaw: Polska Oficyna Wydawnicza BGW, 1993), pp. 55-56.

Table 1: The text of the PLAN OF ACTION of Penderecki's *St Luke Passion* compared with the original text of the Passion according to St Luke.* Omissions are indicated in square brackets, additions in parentheses.

PART ONE

[2] Jesus in the Mount of Olives (Luke 22: 39-44)

39 Et egressus ibat secundum consuetudinem in montem Olivarum. Secuti sunt autem illum et discipuli. 41 positis genibus orabat, 42 dicens: "Pater, si vis, (Pater,) transfer calicem istum a me; (Pater,) verumtamen non mea voluntas, sed tua fiat." 43 Apparuit autem illi angelus de coelo, confortans eum. 44 Et factus in agonia, prolixius orabat. Et factus est sudor eius sicut guttae sanguinis decurrentis in terram.

39 And he came out, and went. as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. 40 And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. 41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, 42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. 43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. 44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. 45 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, 46 And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

[5] Capture (Luke 22: 47-53)

47 Adhuc eo loquente ecce turba: et qui vocabitur Judas, unus de duodecim, antecedebat eos et appropinquavit Jesu ut oscularetur eum. 48 "Juda, osculo Filium hominis tradis?"

52 "Quasi ad latronem existis cum gladiis, et fustibus? 53 sed haec est hora vestra et potestas tenebrarum".

47 And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. 48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? 49 When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? 50 And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. 51 And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him. 52 Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? 53 When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

[8] Peter's triple denial (Luke 22: 54-62)

54 Comprehendentes autem eum, duxerunt ad domum principis sacerdotum: Petrus vero sequebatur a longe. 56 Quem cum vidisset ancilla quaedam sedentem ad lumen, et eum fuisset intuita, dixit: "Et hic cum illo erat." 57 "Mulier, non novi illum." 58 Et post pusillum alius videns eum, dixit: "Et tu de illis es". "O homo, non sum." 59 Et intervallo facto quasi horae unius, alius quidam affirmabat, dicens: "Vere et hic cum illo erat : nam et Gallilaeus est." 60 "Homo, nescio quid dicis." Et continuo adhuc illo loquente cantavit gallus. 61 Et conversus Dominus respexit Petrum. [Et] recordatus est Petrus verbi Domini. 62 Et egressus foras [Petrus] flevit amare.

54 Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. 55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were sat down together, Peter sat down among them. 56 But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. 57 And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. 58 And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. 59 And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. 60 And Peter said, Man I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. 61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

* The English wording for this and all further biblical excerpts is quoted after *The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, n.d.).

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[10] Jesus mocked by the soldiers (Luke 22: 63-71)

63 Et viri, qui tenebant illum, illudebant ei, caedentes: 64 et velaverunt eum, et percutiebant faciem eius et interrogabant eum, dicentes: "Prophetiza, quis est, qui te percussit?"

70 "Tu ergo es Filius Dei?" "Vos dicitis quia ego sum".

63 And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. 64 And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote thee? 65 And many other things blasphemously spake they against him. 66 And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, 67 Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: 68 And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. 69 Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. 70 Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. 71 And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.

[13] Jesus before Pilate (Luke 23: 1-25)

1 Et surgens omnis multitudo eorum, duxerunt illum ad Pilatum. 2 Coeperunt autem illum accusare, dicentes: "Hunc invenimus subvertentem gentem nostram, et prohibentem tributa dare Caesari, et dicentem se Christum regem esse." 3 "Tu es Rex Judaeorum?" "Tu dicis." 4 "Nihil invenio causae in hoc homine." 7 Et remisit eum ad Herodem.

9 Herodes autem interrogabat illum multis sermonibus. At ipse nihil illi respondebat. 11 Sprevit autem illum Herodes indutum veste alba et remisit ad Pilatum.

13 Pilatus autem convocatis principibus sacerdotum, dixit ad illos: 14 "Ecce nihil dignum morte actum est ei.

16 Emendatum ergo illum dimittam." 18 "Tolle hunc, et dimitte nobis Barabbam." 20 Iterum autem Pilatus locutus est ad eos, volens dimittere Jesum. 21 At illi succlamabant, dicentes: "Crucifige, crucifige illum." 22 "Quid enim mali fecit iste? Nullam causam mortis invenio in eo." 21 ("Crucifige, crucifige illum. Crucifige.")

1 And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. 2 And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. 3 And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it. 4 Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. 5 And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. 6 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean. 7 And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. 8 And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. 9 Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. 10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. 11 And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. 12 And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves. 13 And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14 Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: 15 No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. 16 I will therefore chastise him, and release him. 17 (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.) 18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: 19 (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.) 20 Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. 21 But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. 22 And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. 23 And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. 24 And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. 25 And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

PART TWO

[15] The Way of the Cross (John 19: 17)

17 Et bajulans sibi crucem, exivit in eum, qui dicitur Calvariae locum, hebraice autem Golgotha.

17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha.

[17] The Crucifixion (Luke 23: 33)

33 Ibi crucifixerunt eum et latrones, unum a dextris, et alterum a sinistris.

33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

[19] (Luke 23: 34)

34 Dividentes vero vestimenta eius, miserunt sortes. Jesus autem dicebat: "Pater, dimitte illis, (Pater,) non enim sciunt quid faciunt."

34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

[21] Deriding Jesus on the Cross (Luke 23: 35-38)

35 Et stabat populus spectans, et deridebant eum principes cum eis, dicentes: "Alios salvos fecit, se salvum faciat, si hic est Christus Dei electus." 36 Illudebant autem ei et milites accedentes, et acetum offerentes ei, et dicentes: 37 "Si tu es Rex Judaeorum, salvum te fac."

35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.   36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,   37 And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.   38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, This is the King of the Jews.   39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

[22] Jesus speaks to the Good Thief (Luke 23: 39-43)

39 Unus autem de his qui pendebant latronibus, blasphemabat eum, dicens: "Si tu es Christus, salvem fac temetipsum, et nos." 40 Respondens autem alter increpabat eum, dicens: "Neque tu times Deum, quod in eadem damnatione es. 41 Et nos quidem juste, nam digna factis recipimus; hic vero nihil mali gessit." 42 "Domine, memento mei, cum veneris in regnum Tuum." 43 "Amen dico tibi: Hodie mecum eris in paradiso."

40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.   43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

[23] Jesus speaks to His Mother and to St. John (John 19: 25-27)

25 Stabant autem juxta crucem Jesu mater eius, et soror matris eius, Maria Cleophae, et Maria Magdalena. 26 Cum vidisset ergo Jesus matrem, et discipulum stantem, quem diligebat, dicit matri suae: "Mulier, ecce filius tuus." 27 Deinde dicit discipulo: "Ecce mater tua."

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! 27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold, thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home.

[25] The Death of Jesus (Luke 23: 44-46)

44 Erat autem fere hora sexta, et tenebrae factae sunt in universam terram usque in horam nonam. 45 Et obscuratus est sol, et velum templi scissum est medium. 46 Et clamans voce magna Jesus ait: "Pater, in manus Tuas commendo spiritum meum."

44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst, 46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

(John 19: 30)

30 "Consummatum est."

30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Good Thief, where the mixed choirs function as a "multiplied" Bad Thief [22 A].[10] The intent of such switches should be clear: the very people who take an active part in the events of the Passion of Christ simultaneously give account of them. There are no impassive witnesses of these most unique and significant events in the history of mankind. Their witnesses are at the same time their participants, and together form one crowd following Jesus up to Golgotha. In Penderecki's own words, "the choir in the *St. Luke Passion* does not narrate, but takes an active part in the trial of Christ."[11] This assumption prompts the composer to go so far as to replace a narrative passage given in the Gospel as indirect speech with direct speech, in the scene of the trial [13], when the crowd demands Jesus' death (see Table 1, above).[12]

Further cues suggesting that the composer's intention was to show the Passion of Christ as seen with the eyes of its victim can be found in the way the Passion text is prepared. Penderecki uses the original Latin text of the Passion according to St. Luke[13]—the most economical and substantial of all—but emends it through contraction and interpolations from the Passion of St. John.[14] The general principle underlying these changes is to reduce all those passages of the Gospel text that dwell on what Jesus—as a suffering Man—could not know, see, or foresee. This resembles the techniques of contemporary film, where the frame shown by the camera represents the subject's range of vision. Accordingly, all commentaries on the political background of Jesus' trial are omitted; see the sentences describing the political connections between Pilate and Herod (Luke 23: 12), Pilate's intentions (23: 16), the legal premisses of sending Jesus to Herod

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[10]The most unusual setting of the role of the Bad Thief was certainly necessitated by the lack of a third male voice. In the scene with the thieves, the part of Jesus is sung by the baritone, and the part of the Good Thief by the bass.

[11]Translated from an interview with Penderecki published in Ryszard Wasita, "Awangarda i dziedzictwo," *Polska* 7 (1966): 61-62 [62].

[12]In the Passions according to St. Matthew and St. Mark, the cry of the crowd is repeated twice as a direct speech (Mark 14: 13-14; Matthew 27: 22-23). Penderecki follows this example by repeating the cry of the crowd, *Crucifige, crucifige illum* (Luke 23: 21), instead of the account given by the Evangelist (Luke 23: 23).

[13]The composer does not allow for translations into vernacular languages. At the beginning of the score he puts this note: "The work should be performed in Latin only."

[14]The Gospel text employed by Penderecki in the *St. Luke Passion* is shown in Table 1, where it is juxtaposed with the original text of the Passion according to St. Luke.

(23: 6-7), Herod's attitude toward Jesus, characterized by sheer curiosity (23: 8), the custom of releasing one prisoner before Passover (23: 17), and information about Barabbas (23: 19). Equally removed is the text of the superscription on the Cross, which Jesus could not have read (23: 38), as well as the fragments concerning future facts. This is why, in the scene when Jesus—dying—commends His Mother and the Apostle John to each other's care by saying to her, "Woman, behold thy son," and to the disciple, "Behold thy mother," the final words "And from that hour that disciple took her into his own home" (John 19: 27) are left out in Penderecki's text. Significantly, the report on the Passion events concludes precisely at the moment of the death of Jesus, in contrast to the traditional text of the Passion according to St. Luke, which incorporates the description of the burial.[15]

As all the commentaries stem from the Evangelist's part, their removal further weakens the role of the narrator in Penderecki's piece. Ancillaries framing direct speech are also generally omitted. Yet the abridgments go even further, and the composer eliminates Gospel passages containing a description of certain features of Jesus. Deleted are thus the passages in which His divine dignity manifests itself: the description of the miracle Jesus worked in the scene of capture (Luke 22: 49-51) and the prophecy uttered by Him (22: 69). Also omitted are the instructions Jesus directs to the disciples in the Mount of Olives (22: 40, 45-46) and the scene in which He teaches the women during the Way of the Cross (23: 27-31). It was most likely this scene, strangely incongruous with the state of torment and distress of the victim, which impelled Penderecki to replace the account of St. Luke (23: 26-32) with the short excerpt from St. John (19: 17). Penderecki also removes the disputes with the representatives of the Sanhedrine, in which Jesus' human authority as well as His extraordinary intelligence become manifest, making Him prevail over His antagonists. In the scene of capture, the composer has manipulated the text in such a way that the words Jesus directs to the high priests are used as if they were uttered to the crowd (22: 52-53), and the question the high priests ask during the interrogation in the Sanhedrine, "Art thou then the Son of God?"

[15]However, when the Gospel text is read in church, the recitation is commonly suspended for a brief pause at the moment of Jesus' death, and the congregation genuflects. As a result of this pause, the description of the burial is separated from the main account of the Passion The full text of the Passion according to St. Luke, which is read during the mass of Holy Wednesday, includes Luke 22 and 23, 1-53. It thus begins earlier than Penderecki's *St. Luke Passion*: from the betrayal of Judas and the Last Supper.

(22: 70), is merged with the scene in which Jesus is being mocked as if it was posed by the soldiers as a further act of derision. In contradistinction to the three other Passions, the Passion according to St. Luke does not contain any extensive explanations of Jesus given to Pilate in the course of the trial. As a result, Jesus' utterances in Penderecki's *St. Luke Passion* are all either implorations [2, 19, 25], complaints and reproaches [5], or simple confirmations of identity [10, 13], the only exceptions being the promise given to the Good Thief [22] and the order directed to the Mother and to St. John as the last will of Jesus [23]. The two exceptions stem from the Gospel of St. John; their insertion in the *St. Luke Passion* is justified by the exceptional importance of the Words from the Cross in the Christian tradition and also, in the case of the latter, by the liturgical role played by this text, as it will be explained in the further course of these considerations.

Such a preparation of the Passion text, which portrays Jesus as defenseless, terrified, and tormented, testifies to the interpretation proposed earlier, according to which Penderecki shows the Passion of Christ as experienced by Christ, the martyrdom as experienced by the Martyr. If this interpretation is correct, what the audience is given is, in effect, a kind of psychoanalysis of the suffering Jesus. The portrait is thus of a suffering Man, not a suffering God. Unlike traditional settings of the Passion texts by Bach and his predecessors, which show Christ in a hieratic manner and stress His divine dignity, this setting concentrates on the human condition of Jesus, and does so in so psychologically naturalistic a way as to portray Him on the brink of madness caused by pain and terror. Those who wonder whether such an interpretation is not blasphemous will be reassured when they recall that it is fully in line with the theological dogma of the Christian faith according to which Jesus was a true Man "like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4: 15).[16] During His Passion He suffered as every man would. And only owing to this was He able to redeem every human being. What Penderecki's *Passion* shows within the PLAN OF ACTION is precisely Jesus' human nature and the human dimension of His sufferings. Although it chronicles the sufferings of God in the realm of *profanum*, it is not a profanation inasmuch as God Himself entered this realm when He was born as Man.

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[16]This orthodox dogma has been denied by several heresies of gnostic origins, such as Arianism or Monophisitism, influential in the period of Christian antiquity.

Table 2: The texts of the PLAN OF PRAYER of Penderecki's *St Luke Passion* and their liturgical function. Omissions are indicated in square brackets.

PART ONE

[1] Chorus *O Crux ave*	Hymn *Vexilla regis*	9. O Crux ave, spes unica. Hoc Passionis tempore Piis adauge gratiam, Reisque dele crimina. 7. Te, fons salutis, Trinitas, Collaudet omnis spiritus.	the Time of the Passion of Christ, vespers
[3] Baritone aria *Deus meus*	Psalm 22: 1	Deus, Deus meus, respice in me: quare me dereliquisti?	Maundy Thursday, baring the altars
	Psalm 5: 1	Verba mea auribus percipe, Domine, intellige clamorem meum.	second Sunday of Lent, communion
	Psalm 22: 2	Deus meus, clamabo per diem, et non exaudies.	Maundy Thursday, baring the altars
[4] Soprano aria *Domine, quis habitabit*	Psalm 15: 1	Domine, quis habitabit in taberna-culo tuo, aut quis requiescet in monte sancto tuo?	Tenebrae of Holy Saturday, first nocturn
	Psalm 4: 8	In pace [in idipsum] dormiam [et requiescam].	Tenebrae of Holy Saturday, first nocturn
	Psalm 16: 9	[Propter hoc laetatum est cor meum, et exsultavit lingua mea, insuper] et caro mea requiescet in spe.	Tenebrae of Holy Saturday, first nocturn
[6] Chorus *Ierusalem, Ierusalem*	The Lamentations of Jeremiah	Ierusalem, Ierusalem, convertere ad Dominum, Deum tuum.	Tenebrae of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday
[7] Chorus *Ut quid, Domine*	Psalm 10: 1	Ut quid, Domine, recessisti longe?	
[9] Bass aria *Iudica me, Deus*	Psalm 43: 1	Judica me, Deus, et discerne causam meam.	Sunday of the Passion of Christ, introit of the mass
[11] Soprano aria *Ierusalem, Ierusalem*	The Lamen-tations of Jeremiah	Ierusalem, Ierusalem, convertere ad Dominum, Deum tuum.	Tenebrae of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday
[12] Chorus *Miserere mei*	Psalm 56: 1	Miserere mei, Deus, quoniam con-cultavit me homo, tota die impugnans tribulavit me.	Monday of the Time of the Passion of Christ, introit of the mass

PART TWO

[14] Chorus *In pulverem mortis*	Psalm 22, 16	In pulverem mortis deduxisti me.	Maundy Thursday, baring the altars
[16] Passacaglia *Popule meus*	Improperia	Popule meus, quid feci tibi? Aut in quo contristavi te? Responde mihi. Quia eduxi te de terra Aegypti, parasti Crucem Salvatori tuo?	Good Friday, Adoration of the Cross

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	Supplication	Hagios o Theos. Sanctus Deus. Hagios ischyros. Sanctus fortis. Hagios athanatos, eleison himas. Sanctos immortalis, miserere nobis.	
[18] Soprano aria *Crux fidelis*	Hymn *Crux fidelis*	Crux fidelis, inter omnes Arbor una nobilis. Nulla silva talem profert, Fronde, flore germine. Dulce lignum, [dulces clavos,] Dulce pondus sustinet.	Good Friday, Adoration of the Cross
	Acclamation	Ecce lignum Crucis, in quo salus mundi pependit.	
[20] Chorus *In pulverem mortis*	Psalm 22: 16c, 18-20	In pulverem mortis deduxisti me. Foderunt manus meas et pedes meos: dinumeraverunt omnia ossa mea. Ipsi vero consideraverunt me [et inspexerunt me, diviserunt sibi vestimenta mea,] et super vestem meam miserunt sortem. Tu autem, Domine, ne elongaveris auxilium tuum a me, ad defensionem meam conspice.	Maundy Thursday, baring the altars
[24] Chorus *Stabat Mater*	Sequence *Stabat Mater*	1. Stabat Mater dolorosa Iuxta Crucem lacrimosa, Dum pendebat Filius. 5. Quis est homo qui non fleret, Matrem Christi si videret, In tanto supplicio? 9. Eia Mater, fons amoris, Me sentire vim doloris Fac, ut tecum lugeam. 10. Fac ut ardeat cor meum In amando Christum Deum, Ut sibi complaceam. 19. Christe, cum sit hinc exire, Da per Materm me venire Ad palmam victoriae. 20. Quando corpus morietur, Fac, ut animae donetur Paradisi gloria.	the Feast of Seven Pains of the Holy Virgin Mary
[27] Chorus *In Te, Domine, speravi*	Psalm 31: 1-2, 5	In Te, Domine, speravi, non confundar in aeternum. In justitia Tua libera me. Inclina ad me aurem Tuam, accelera ut eruas me. Esto mihi in Deum protectorem et in domum refugii, ut salvum me facias. In manus Tuas commendo spiritum meum: redemisti me, Domine, Deus veritatis.	Friday of the Passion of Christ, introit of the mass

Yet the human sufferings of God have their theological consequence in the consecration of the sufferings of the people. The martyrdom of Christ is therefore an archetype of every human martyrdom, prominently among them that of millions of men and women during World War II. It is in this sense that, reflecting upon his piece, the composer says: "The [*St. Luke*] *Passion* is the suffering and death of Christ, but it is also the suffering and death at Auschwitz, the tragic experience of the mankind in the middle of the twentieth century."[17]

The PLAN OF PRAYER

The Texts

Jesus, the true Man exposed in the PLAN OF ACTION, is at the same time the true God of Christianity. Penderecki does not omit this second, divine dimension of Christ's nature, but exposes it on the PLAN OF PRAYER. If the PLAN OF ACTION represents the realm of *profanum* in the *St. Luke Passion*, the PLAN OF PRAYER introduces the realm of *sacrum*. It is based on liturgical texts of the Catholic Church in their original Latin versions as they are found in the *Missale Romanum* and have been performed in churches—also in Polish churches—until the reform of the Catholic liturgy initiated by the Vatican Council II. These texts were selected and arranged by the composer himself.[18] For Penderecki, who grew up in the Catholic tradition and became acquainted with church music and liturgical chant in his early childhood,[19] Latin texts were familiar not as objects of philological study, but from his own participation in the liturgical ceremonies. They were laden with the singular emotional quality that these ceremonies have for a believer. The liturgical reform of the Vatican Council, promulgated in the 1963 *Conciliar Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, led in subsequent years to the supersession of Latin by vernacular languages.[20] The *St. Luke Passion* is thus one of the last testimonies of the influence that the living tradition of the Latin liturgy exerted on contemporary music.

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[17]Wasita, "Awangarda i dziedzictwo": 62.

[18]In his work on the text of the *St. Luke Passion* Penderecki was assisted by a philologist, Stanisław Krygiel (see Erhardt, *Spotkania z Krzysztofem Pendereckim*, p. 79).

[19]Erhardt, *Spotkania z Krzysztofem Pendereckim*, p. 22.

[20]In Poland, the first post-conciliar liturgical books in the vernacular began appearing at the beginning of the 1970s.

Among the texts Penderecki employed are the hymns *Vexilla regis* and *Crux fidelis*, *The Lamentations of Jeremiah*, the improperia *Popule meus*, the supplication *Sanctus Deus*, the acclamation *Ecce lignum crucis*, the sequence *Stabat Mater*, and the psalms nos. 22 and 31 as well as 4, 5, 10, 15, 16, 43, 56. (Please refer to Table 2, which also gives detailed information about their liturgical functions.) Almost all of these texts belong to the liturgy of the period called Time of the Passion of Christ, the last two weeks of Lent. The most important fragments are sung during Holy Week, especially on Good Friday, and on that day particularly during the Adoration of the Cross. A chant not belonging to the liturgy of Lent, but closely connected with the Passion of Christ, is the sequence *Stabat Mater* for the Feast of the Seven Pains of the Holy Virgin Mary, falling on September 15. On that day, an excerpt from the Gospel of St. John is read (John 19: 25-27): the same that in Penderecki's *Passion* supplements the text of St. Luke and immediately precedes his *Stabat Mater*. Penderecki had actually composed this last choral piece a few years earlier, in 1962, and then integrated it in the *St. Luke Passion*. Clearly, the *Stabat Mater* text was too significant for Christ's Passion—particularly in the religious tradition of Poland—to be omitted in this work.[21] Its inclusion in the PLAN OF PRAYER thus justifies the textual interpolation from the Gospel of St. John in the PLAN OF ACTION.

The Musical Setting

As stated at the outset, the musical setting of the PLAN OF PRAYER makes use of the twelve-tone technique Penderecki had employed earlier in his choral pieces with liturgical texts, *Psalms of David* (1958) and *Stabat Mater* (1962). However, Penderecki's twelve-tone technique departs from the classical twelve-tone theory of Schoenberg and his followers. This is apparent in the free manipulation of rows repeatedly pointed out by commentators on Penderecki's œuvre: manipulations that neglect the rule of non-repetition of pitch and exploit row fragments and entities in their own right. The composer treats rows as melodic units—themes even—without resorting to octave transfer of their component pitches. Moreover, his way

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[21]An important component of the Polish Lent tradition is the paraliturgical service *Gorzkie żale* (Bitter sorrows). It includes a prayer entitled *Rozmowa duszy z Matką Bolesną* (A Dialogue of a Soul with the Sorrowful Mother), which is a free poetic paraphrase of the *Stabat Mater* sequence. In its Polish translation, the sequence was set to music by Karol Szymanowski in his *Stabat Mater* (1926), a work constituting the corner stone of Polish 20th-century religious music.

of shaping rows displays two features characteristic of his pieces to this day: the predilection to gap-fill melodies, in which large intervals are subsequently bridged with semitones, and (as a complementary feature) the gradual intervallic expansion of a row melody starting from the semitone.

In the analyses of the *St. Luke Passion* that have been carried out to this day,[22] two melodic rows are customarily indicated, both of them introduced at the very beginning of the piece and exposed in single melodic lines: row 1 in the lowest register played by instruments (Example 1) and row 2 in the highest register of the boys' choir (Example 2).

Example 1: Row 1. Opening chorus *O Crux, ave* [1], mm. 3-6

Example 2: Row 2. Opening chorus
O Crux, ave [1], mm. 7-8

[22]Cf. Józef Chomiński and Krystyna Wilkowska-Chomińska, *Formy muzyczne*, vol. 5: *Wielkie formy wokalne* (Cracow: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1984), pp. 460-486, and Erhardt, *Spotkania z Krzysztofem Pendereckim*, pp. 77-93.

These are undoubtedly the most prominent rows in the piece. And yet, a careful analysis leads one to discover one more melodic row. That this row has thus far escaped the attention of analysts may be due to the fact that it occurs in its full scope only at the very end of the work—in the final chorus —although the melodic material derived from it is employed already earlier in the course of the *Passion*. In the overall construction of the piece, row 3 thus counterbalances the other two rows. Its presentation is not less sharp and clear-cut than that of rows 1 and 2 in the opening chorus: it is sung in unison without any accompaniment and constitutes a self-contained entity both in the musical sense and as to its literary text (Example 3).

Example 3: Row 3. Final chorus *In Te, Domine, speravi* [27], mm. 11-14

Particularly noteworthy is the internal construction of all three rows, which is exceptionally elaborate and complex (see Example 4). A striking trait is their symmetry. Row 1 is the most elaborate in this respect: when read backwards, it turns into its own inversion. In order to satisfy the demands of symmetry, Penderecki extends it by one note, making the last, thirteenth note the repetition of the initial C♯ in the higher octave. The seventh note, G, which is the axis of symmetry in row 1, divides the octave into two halves (1-7: C♯–G, 7-13: G–C♯); each of these halves in turn displays an internal symmetry in relation to its middle pitch, E and B♭, respectively. As the entire row 1, so also each of its halves turns into its own inversion when read from the end. What is more, each of them spans a tritone, employing all semitones within it in the same way that the full row spans and covers an octave. In all its complexity, row 1 employs only two intervals between consecutive notes: the minor second and the minor third. It is a perfect exemplification of Penderecki's gap-fill melody because the skips of the thirds are instantly filled with semitones in contrary motion.

The symmetry of row 2 is different: not horizontal but vertical. This row forms a symmetrical process of gradual intervallic expansion which is accomplished by means of semitone steps downwards and upwards. These alternate in such a way that the interval between them (i.e., between the concluding pitch of the preceding semitone and the initial pitch of the following one) increases progressively: from the major second (E♭–F) through the major third (F♯–D) to the tritone (C♯–G). In keeping with this regularity, the next interval should be a descending minor sixth leading to the semitone step C–B, and then an ascending minor seventh followed by the last semitone A–B♭. However, the composer has reversed the succession of the two last semitones: instead of the ascending semitone A–B♭, he uses its descending version B♭–A and inserts it before the previous semitone, C–B. As a result of this manipulation, a four-tone motif arises, which in the German (as well as the Polish) naming of musical pitches yields B–A–C–H: a broad hint at the greatest composer of passions in the history of music. This motif itself is again symmetrical in the same sense as row 1: when read from the end, it turns into its own inversion. The perturbation which the motif B–A–C–H occasions within the structure of row 2 is reflected in a special distribution of its pitches in the original presentation of this row (refer back to Example 2): whereas this presentation is in the main performed by the boys' choir, the descending semitone B♭–A that disturbs the otherwise consistently and symmetrically expanding course of the row is turned over to the alto voices of the first mixed choir.

Example 4: Analysis of the inner structures of the rows

Just like rows 1 and 2, row 3 also displays features of symmetry. Its overall course is divided into two segments consisting respectively of seven and five tones. This division is again reflected in the distribution of these tones between two groups of performers: the first seven tones are sung by the boys' choir, the remaining five tones by tenors of the first mixed choir. The symmetry of the second segment is clear: as in the case of row 1, it turns into its own inversion when read from the end. The symmetry axis falls on the central pitch, F♯. Less apparent—since incomplete—is the symmetry of the first segment within row 3. If one added G♯ as its eighth tone, then its retrograde would once again be identical with its inversion. But such an addition is impossible as it would result in a repetition of a pitch within the row before all the remaining pitches had been employed in it, a violation of the basic rule of dodecaphonic composition Penderecki would admit only in later transformations but not in the original row form.[23]

As mentioned before, the melodic rows do not necessarily—and even not frequently—occur as wholes. Much more often the composer operates with fragments. Interestingly, such fragments usually coincide with the component elements observed within the rows' structures. This is particularly evident in rows 1 and 2. Row 1 is represented by its two halves overlapping at the central tone. Row 2 is typically broken up in a way that segregates the final B-A-C-H motif. As two relatively independent melodic structures, these components of row 2 are employed chiefly in the choruses *Miserere* [12] and *Popule meus* [16]—the segments of the PLAN OF PRAYER in which the B-A-C-H motif is most widely exploited. In *Miserere* it constitutes the main melodic theme associated with the initial and most significant word of Psalm 56; in *Popule meus* it occurs predominantly as the recurrent formula carrying the tremendous construction of the *passacaglia*.[24] The function of the counterpoints to B-A-C-H is performed in both segments by the eight remaining tones of row 2, as shown in Example 5a and 5b below.

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[23]The repetition of the C♯ in row 1 happens instead as the thirteenth pitch 13, i.e., after all pitches have sounded.

[24]Penderecki himself uses the word *passacaglia* in reference to *Popule meus* in the score of the piece. The term is employed loosely though, as there are in the course of this *passacaglia* passages that lack the B-A-C-H theme; in some other passages, the theme is allocated to a register other than the fundamental bass line.

Example 5: Component elements of row 2 as theme and counterpoint.
Passacaglia *Popule meus* [16], mm. 47-54 and *Miserere* [12], mm. 6-12

Fragments comprising the first four pitches of a row are also crucial. As the entire rows, so also are their initial four-note groups employed in their original forms as well as in various contrapuntal transformations, but each of them occurs most frequently in one distinguished transformation (Example 6). In the case of row 1 this transformation of the first four-note group is an inversion, in the case of row 2 a retrograde, and in row 3, an inverted retrograde.[25] The composer has chosen these transformations so that all of them begin with the descending semitone.[26] As a result, they

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[25]The preference of one contrapuntal transformation is evident in the cases of four-note groups derived from rows 1 and 2. The first four-note fragment of row 3 is more equivocal in this respect since, apart from the inverted retrograde occurring in *Popule meus* [16 B], also its original and inverted forms are heard [12, 14, 20]. From among the three initial four-note groups, the most important is that of row 2. It occurs in the *Passion* more often than any other and constitutes the basis for further melodic structures derived from it, to be found in the opening chorus, *O Crux ave* (17), and in *Miserere* (35-37: basses).

[26]There is one more melodic structure in Penderecki's *Passion*, consisting of four tones and starting with a descending semitone. It sounds twice in the soprano aria *Crux fidelis* [18], attached to the words of the acclamation, *Ecce lignum crucis in quo salus mundi pendit*, and performed there by the mixed choirs: see B♭–A –F–F♯ (58-65) and E–E♭–B –C (99-105). This structure is not derived from any of the three rows. Instead, it should be interpreted as a juncture of two semitone steps: descending and ascending. The role of the semitone in the St. Luke Passion is discussed thoroughly in the further course of this essay.

sound very similar to one another as well as to the earlier-discussed four-tone motif B-A-C-H, in the context of which they actually very often occur.[27] It is worth observing that the B-A-C-H motif itself presents the last four pitches of row 2, or the first four of its retrograde.

Example 6: The initial four-note groups of the rows in their most salient contrapuntal transformations and the B-A-C-H motif

Apart from the three rows and their fragments, the *St. Luke Passion* contains one further melodic element of crucial importance: the descending semitone. This motif usually assumes the shape of a gesture displaying a rhythmic arrangement in which its second, lower note is repeated. Whenever it occurs in vocal parts, the first two notes of this gesture are sung on one syllable, joined by a slur, whereas the change of syllable happens on the last, third note. This is how the motif is presented for the first time, at the very beginning of the *Passion* (Example 7).
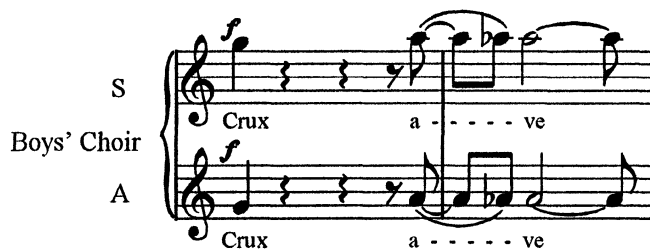
Example 7: The descending-semitone motif.
Opening chorus *O Crux, ave* [1], mm. 1-2

[27]In *Miserere* [12], *In pulverem mortis* [14, 20] and *Popule meus* [16].

In this first presentation the gesture is preceded by a single tone lying a whole tone lower than the initial pitch. In previous analyses of Penderecki's *Passion* this phrase has been labeled a "trichord" and declared the main melodic unit of the composition alongside rows 1 and 2.[28] Without calling into question the importance this trichord has within the piece, one should observe that it does not form an integral musical unit. Rather, it arises through an attachment of the initial note to the gesture of the descending semitone. The supplementary character of this attachment is evidenced by the pause and also by the distribution of the component tones within the set of the performing forces: in the original presentation of the trichord in the first bars of the *St. Luke Passion* the initial note is performed by the choral *tutti*, whereas the following semitone is sung solely by the boys' choir. It is actually this last semitone which constitutes the most essential melodic element of the *St. Luke Passion*, as it sounds in almost all parts of the PLAN OF PRAYER. By contrast, the trichord as a whole occurs very rarely in the further course of the piece.[29]

The essential character of the semitone motif in the *Passion* manifests itself above all through its frequent occurrences as an independent melodic gesture; its is heard chiefly in its descending form but appears also as the inverted ascending semitone. Furthermore, descending and ascending semitones are present in all three rows and their derivative four-note groups, and the B-A-C-H motif can legitimately be interpreted as a combination of two descending semitones.[30] Permeating the melodic material of the composition, the semitone thus makes for the musical homogeneity of the PLAN OF PRAYER. What is more, several motifs and themes characteristic of this plan are also derived from the descending semitone, as shown in Example 8 below.

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[28]Chomiński and Wilkowska-Chomińska, *Formy muzyczne* 5: 462. Incidentally, the structure of the trichord is another example of Penderecki's gap-fill melody in that its last pitch constitutes a semitone filling of the opening whole tone.

[29]For the most important of these occurrences see the soprano aria, *Ierusalem, Ierusalem* [11].

[30]Such an interpretation seems justified by the original presentation of the B-A-C-H motif in the framework of row 2 at the beginning of the piece (see Example 2), where the second semitone takes the shape of the descending melodic gesture just discussed. The same gesture occurs regularly as a part of the B-A-C-H motif in the course of the passacaglia *Popule meus* [16].

Example 8: Motifs and themes derived from the descending-semitone gesture (soprano aria *Crux fidelis* [18], mm. 11-12; baritone aria *Deus meus* [3], m.1; chorus *Stabat Mater* [24], m. 1); and survey of the derivation

In contradistinction to rows, which are spread relatively evenly all over the piece, these motifs and themes are assigned by the composer to its individual parts and univocally associated with them by listeners even if occasionally occurring outside them. Each of these univocal associations is strengthened by the textual phrases that the motifs carry. The descending-semitone gesture constitutes the main motif of the soprano aria *Crux fidelis* [18] and is associated with its key word, *Crux*. The omission of the final note repetition in this gesture results from the text, which is confined to only one syllable. In turn, the inversion of the semitone forms the core of the paramount motif in the baritone aria *Deus meus* [3]. It is also found in the theme of the sequence *Stabat Mater* [24], performed by the mixed choirs. Although, as observed earlier, *Stabat Mater* was composed independently of the *Passion* and only later inserted in it, this piece is thus not a foreign body within the *St. Luke Passion*. Instead, it is skillfully incorporated into the network of motivic relationships that underlie the larger composition. Its close intervallic relation to the motif *Deus meus*—and, consequently, also to *Crux*—results from its being based on the combination of a whole

tone and semitone steps; this relation is shown in the vertical dimension of Example 8. At the same time, the characteristic shape of the *Stabat Mater* motif, with its slurred major second and its concluding repetition of the last note, makes for another dimension of its relation to *Deus meus* as well as to the basic motif of the descending semitone: a relation that could be called "diagonal" because of the way it is represented in the example.

Incidentally, apart from the motivic relationships of its theme to other segments of the work, the skillful inclusion of the *Stabat Mater* in the *St. Luke Passion* can also be ascertained from the way in which the theme of the sequence is employed earlier in the opening chorus. The *Stabat Mater* melody is sung there with the words *Te, fons salutis, Trinitas* (19-44)—a phrase that forms an obvious counterpart to the incipit of the third strophe in the sequence, *Eia, Mater, fons amoris*.[31] In the *Stabat Mater* it is exactly this third strophe which brings the proper musical elaboration of the theme, whereas the first strophe presents it only once at the very beginning. Significantly, the first occurrence of the theme in the opening chorus (22-24) is identical to its second occurrence in the third strophe of the sequence (62-66): as there, so also here it is sung by the basses of the first mixed choir on the pitches B♭–C–D♭. Also identical is the way this theme is elaborated within the polyphonic texture of these sections as well as the selection of its accompanying melodic material, which consists of the ascending whole tone and the descending semitone. Both intervals are undoubtedly derived from the intervallic structure of the *Stabat Mater* theme itself.

The Theology of Prayer

For the theological meaning of Penderecki's *St. Luke Passion*, the most important factor is the extensive employment of psalm texts in the PLAN OF PRAYER. Psalms are not just prayers, they are prophecies. The so-called "Messianic psalms" in particular are prophecies uttered on behalf of the Messiah by the inspired authors of the Old Testament, traditionally identified with King David. Their subject—the suffering God's Servant—is a prefiguration of Christ. And indeed, Christ Himself during His Passion prays with the words of Messianic psalms. In the Gospels of St. Mark (15: 34) and St. Matthew (27: 46) the Crucified Christ cries: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?," which are the words of Psalm 22. And

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[31]This is the third strophe of Penderecki's setting, but the ninth strophe of the sequence as a whole. In his setting Penderecki selects only six out of 21 strophes of the *Stabat Mater* (see Table 2).

immediately before His death in the Gospel of St. Luke (23: 46), He says: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," a quotation from Psalm 31. St. Matthew in his Gospel (27: 43) chooses again words from Psalm 22, which he puts into the mouth of Christ's executioners: "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him" (Psalm 22, 9), while St. John (19: 24) comments on the Passion events by referring to the following words of the same psalm: "They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots" (Psalm 22: 19). The close connection of Psalm 22 with the Passion of Christ causes it to play a crucial role in the liturgy of the Holy Week. The entire psalm is sung during the ceremony of Baring the Altars, after the mass and the vespers on Maundy Thursday, a moment that constitutes a transition to the Liturgy of the Passion of Christ celebrated on Good Friday. Penderecki follows the liturgy in emphasizing Psalm 22 over all other psalms included in the *St. Luke Passion*. As shown in Table 2, its text is employed in as many as three segments of the PLAN OF PRAYER: in the aria *Deus meus* [3] and in the two choruses on the text *In pulverem mortis* [14, 20]. The composer also highlights Psalm 31. First heard as Christ's prayer and for this reason as part of the PLAN OF ACTION [25], it subsequently returns in the PLAN OF PRAYER as the text of the final chorus, *In Te, Domine, speravi* [27]. Other psalm texts integrated into the *Passion* are chosen apparently under the provision that they could equally well be uttered by the suffering Christ (see the excerpts of Psalms 4, 5, 10, 15, 16, 56 in Table 2). This statement holds true even for some of the texts taken not from the psalms, such as the *Lamentations of Jeremiah* and, particularly, the improperia *Popule meus*, which are reproaches that the Savior directs to His people. As a result, Christ in the *St. Luke Passion* stands not only in the center of the PLAN OF ACTION—as its subject—but also in the center of the PLAN OF PRAYER—as the lyrical subject of the liturgical poetry. The interpretation of Penderecki's *Passion* as a Passion according to Jesus Christ, proposed earlier, extends in this way on the entire construction of this piece.

Seen from this angle, the fact that psalms—as any liturgical texts—are at the same time prayers of the believers has a profound significance, for it reflects the vocation of every believer to be one with Christ. According to Christian theology, a believer's life and death should be a participation in the life and death of Christ. As St. Paul emphasizes: "For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2: 11-12). This is why the words of Psalm 31, *In*

manus Tuas commendo spiritum meum (Into Thy hands I commend my spirit) appear in the *Missale Romanum* for the ceremony of the Extreme Unction, in the course of the sick person's prayer and among pious sighs to be suggested to him during the agony. Interestingly, the same words followed by the phrase *Redemisti nos, Domine, Deus veritatis* (Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, God of truth) are heard in the Short Responsory within the Complin, the evening hour of worship immediately preceding the night's rest. In Christian—and not only Christian—symbolism, sleep has often been understood as related to the last rest in death. The text of Psalm 5, inclusive of its initial verse *Verba mea auribus percipe, Domine, intellige clamorem meum* (Incline Thine ears unto my words, O Lord, my plaints consider), which Penderecki employed in the aria *Deus meus* [3], is used in the Matins of the Dead. And the words of Psalm 43, *Judica me, Deus, et discerne causam meam de gente non sancta* (Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation), heard here in the bass aria [9], are recited by a priest in the course of the introductory ceremonies of the mass, after the sign of the cross.

The texts of psalms used by Penderecki in the *St. Luke Passion* display thus a storeyed structure of prayer: (1) a prayer of Christ as the Son of God directed to His Father and (2) a prayer of the community of believers directed to Christ as the Redeemer. Within this structure, Christ assumes a double role: at the same time as a subject of prayer and as its addressee. In this former role His divine nature is involved, in the latter—His human nature:

<div align="center">

God the Father

↑

Jesus Christ:

the Son of God and the Redeemer

↑

believers

</div>
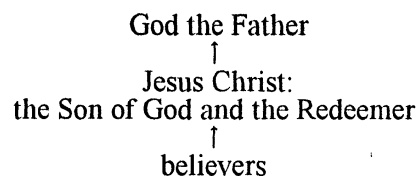
Figure 1. The storeyed structure of prayer in the *St. Luke Passion*

These two natures of Christ—the divine and the human—are separately represented in Penderecki's *Passion*. Musically, Christ-as-man is impersonated by the baritone solo within the PLAN OF ACTION, while Christ-as-God, the eternal Son of God, is embodied by the boys' choir within the PLAN OF PRAYER. The symbolic role performed by the boys' choir as the *alter ego* of Christ has not thus far been noticed. Yet there is strong evidence in favor of this hypothesis. In contradistinction to the three mixed

choirs that are part of the performing forces of Penderecki's *Passion*, the boys' choir never participates in *turba* sections. More importantly, the boys' choir presents only those texts of the PLAN OF PRAYER that could be uttered by Jesus, while omitting passages that would be proper exclusively for the believers. Lastly and most importantly, aside from the baritone solo it is exclusively the boys' choir that sings words uttered by Christ during His Passion. The most striking moment in this respect is certainly that of Christ's agony (see Example 9) when, after the baritone's line *Pater, In manus Tuas commendo spiritum meum* (Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit), the boys' choir adds Jesus' subsequent words according to St. John (19: 30), *Consummatum est* (It is finished).

Example 9: The Death of Jesus [25], mm. 27-29

The privileged role of the boys' choir is also evident in the fact that, although employed only infrequently, it is entrusted with introducing the most important melodic elements underlying the musical material of the piece: two out of three rows (2 and 3) as well as the descending-semitone motif. The choice of a boys' choir as the representative of Christ's divine nature in Penderecki's *Passion* corroborates the composer's deep theological insights. A boy is a close synonym to son—the Son of God. More generally, a boy is a child, and in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, "child" is rendered as *pais*, a word that also means "servant."[32]

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[32]Joseph Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum: Vorlesungen über das Apostolische Glaubensbekentniss* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1990), p. 177.

As a result, Christ as the Son of God in the New Testament is identified with the Old-Testament figure of God's Servant, an identification that is crucial for the Christian faith.

Domine: the Essence of Prayer

The storeyed structure of psalm poetry characteristic of the PLAN OF PRAYER finds its emblematic realization in the musical motif that is attached to the word *Domine* and recurs several times in the course of the *St. Luke Passion*. The very expression, *Domine* (O Lord), is to be considered as the essence of prayer; it embodies the subject's recognition of his or her subordination and dependance—and even more, his or her acceptance of this subordination. To call someone "Lord" is to make him "my Lord." *Domine* is thus a performative expression in the sense ascribed to this term by Austin: it does what it says.[33] The musical motif *Domine* completes the list of fundamental musical elements of the discussed piece (Example 10). Its function has often been compared with that performed by the motif attached to the word *Dominum* in Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*. Both these motifs resemble each other owing to the homophonic texture of their four-part harmonies and similar rhythms rendering the natural rhythm of the word. Yet, whereas in Stravinsky the *Dominum*-motif forms a repetition of one chord, in Penderecki it is made up of a juncture of two harmonies: a dissonant four-note chord and its resolution to an octave duplication of a minor third.

Example 10: *Domine*-motif; original presentation in the baritone aria *Deus meus* [3], m. 12, and analysis of the inner structure

[33]John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

Although the *Domine*-motif is the sole harmonic element within the musical material of the piece, it displays a close connection to the melodic elements discussed earlier. Its harmonic structure arises from a super-position of descending and ascending semitones derived from the essential melodic motif of the *St. Luke Passion*. As in the melodic gesture opening the piece (refer back to Example 7), each of the semitones is elaborated here by means of a repetition extending one of its notes. The difference is that the repetition occurs here not, as in the descending-semitone motif, after the second, but after the first note. The component semitone steps of the *Domine*-motif can thus be interpreted as retrogrades and inverted retrogrades of the melodic motif underlying the PLAN OF PRAYER. These semitones form two pairs such that within every pair one descending and one ascending semitone together create a resolution of an augmented sixth to an octave. The *Domine*-motif as a whole is thus symmetrical in its vertical dimension, this vertical symmetry as well as the component semitone steps making for its relationship with row 2. It is also noteworthy that in the *Domine*-motif Penderecki's earlier observed predilection for gap-fill structures manifests itself one more time. Were one to consolidate all its notes within one octave, the motif would present itself as consisting of two diminished thirds, each of them resolved inwards to—and thus filled by—a unison. By resolving two different diminished thirds to a minor third, the composer obtains thus a sound range staked out by a perfect fourth and completely covered with semitones.

The *Domine*-motif is heard eight times in the course of the *Passion*, always in the same musical setting but in different choral parts: either in the boys' choir or in the mixed choirs' *tutti*. In the former cases, since the boys' choir consists only of sopranos and altos, it has to be supplemented with two more voices in order that the four-part harmony of the motif may be obtained. Such supplementing voices are tenors of the first mixed choir.[34] Yet their role is merely auxiliary and does not affect the supremacy of the boys' choir, which gives these occurrences their special character and timbre. The occurrences of the *Domine*-motif in the boys' choir are most frequent and represent its basic, most typical version also as regards pitch: all of them constitute the same transposition of this motif—the one shown in Example 10—resolving to the third E–G. Instead, when sung by

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[34]In the last presentation of the *Domine*-motif at the very end of the piece [27], the part of the boys' choir is additionally reinforced by the sopranos of the first mixed choir.

the mixed choirs, the *Domine*-motif is transposed, resolving to C♯–E [7], B–D [13], and again C♯–E [19].

The twofold assignment of the *Domine*-motif to the boys' choir and mixed choirs can be easily understood in the context of the storeyed structure of prayer that is characteristic of the *St. Luke Passion* (please refer back to Figure 1). Within this structure there are two subjects that say *Domine*: the believers praying to Christ the Savior and Christ as the Son of God praying to His Father. Based on what has been acknowledged thus far about the roles played respectively by the mixed and the boys' choirs in Penderecki's *Passion*, one has to admit that the occurrences of the *Domine*-motif sung by the mixed choirs represent the prayer of believers worshiping Christ during His Passion, whereas *Domine* in the boys' choir epitomizes the prayer of Christ Himself worshiping God the Father. Particularly interesting in this respect is the occurrence of the *Domine*-motif in the scene of Pilate's judgment [13]. Asked by Pilate: *Tu es rex Iudaeorum?* (Art thou the King of the Jews?), Jesus confirms by saying: *Tu dicis* (Thou sayest it). Immediately thereafter, the mixed choirs add *Domine*, a word that is absent from the original Gospel text (Example 11). With this textual insertion they pay homage to the divine dignity of Christ as He has just revealed it to them.

Example 11: Jesus before Pilate [13], mm. 35-38

In the Crucifixion scene [17], when Christ begs His Father to forgive His executioners, the mixed choirs insert the *Domine*-motif as a prayer offered by the believers. This occurrence can be understood in the light of an excerpt from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53: 5). It is an article of the Christian faith that the Passion of Christ was "a propitiation for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2: 2). Therefore the believers, too, are Christ's executioners and need to beg for His forgiveness. Parenthetically, this theological argument sheds light on the musical identification of the community of believers with the unbridled crowd that is deriding Jesus and watching His martyrdom, as both of these plural subjects are represented in Penderecki's *Passion* by the mixed choirs.[35]

Arguably the most unusual manifestation of the *Domine*-motif occurs in the course of the dialogue between Christ and the Good Thief [22]. This is the only time when the word *Domine* is part of the Gospel text, uttered by the thief and directed by him to Jesus. Yet the composer extracts the word from the thief's lines and turns it over to the boys' choir. The resulting effect is that of an inner cry emitted by the Redeemer. This may give the impression that Jesus was promptly submitting the thief's request to the Father (Example 12).

Example 12: Jesus speaks to the Good Thief [22], mm. 24-30

[35]The same is true for Bach's passions. Switches resulting from direct juxtapositions of these two roles performed by the choir—of the believers and of *turba*—which occur frequently in Bach's *St. John Passion* and *St. Matthew Passion*, can also be found in Penderecki.

Domine, as emphasized before, fulfills the performative function of prayer and thus appears more often than not as belonging to the PLAN OF PRAYER. Yet in each of the three above-mentioned cases, when the word is set by means of its characteristic harmonic motif, it occurs in the context of the Gospel report of the Passion events. In this way it introduces the dimension of prayer into the PLAN OF ACTION and becomes one of the most important factors contributing to the unification of these two plans.

Interpenetration of Prayer and Action

Although the plans of action and of prayer in the *St. Luke Passion* are clearly delineated and governed by different compositional techniques, their separation is not absolute. That they penetrate one another follows from many compositional factors, which act in both directions: from the PLAN OF ACTION to the PLAN OF PRAYER and vice versa.

The former direction of penetration takes place when sonoristic effects characteristic of the PLAN OF ACTION are introduced into the PLAN OF PRAYER. Whereas in the PLAN OF ACTION their employment is necessitated by the rules of the sonoristic technique, in the PLAN OF PRAYER it is justified rather by their timbral and expressive qualities. The qualities are able to give an emotional coloring to the act of praying, which thus appears in Penderecki's *Passion* not as purely intellectual but swelled with an ardent emotion—the same, though more restrained, emotion which permeates the Gospel report. The sonoristic effects heard in the vocal parts are recitation and whisper. They are braided into the lines of the polyphonic texture as a prolongation of singing, which thereby appears as if stripped of its artistic artificiality and taken to the most immediate expression. Protracted sounds and clusters, which the composer employs as a background of the polyphonic lines or solo singing, add a flavor of imperceptible emotional tension similar to the one they elicit in the narrative sections of the PLAN OF ACTION. Semitone clusters, often of an elaborate intervallic structure, sound like vertical compilations of the rows and motifs of the piece. An impression of their being derivatives of those melodic elements arises particularly in clusters built step by step by adding and retaining their consecutive component sounds. Even though this impression is for the most part deceptive, this way of building clusters allows the composer occasionally to disguise real melodic structures derived from the rows. This is the case of the motifs B-A-C-H, presented many times as semitone

clusters in *Miserere* and *Popule meus*. The beginning of the soprano aria *Domine, quis habitabit* [4] and the segment of the improperia *Popule meus* [16] falling on words *Responde mihi* (87-120) offer exceptionally extended examples of the sonoristic technique penetrating into the plan of prayer. Especially the latter includes a great number of vocal as well as instrumental sonoristic effects without equivalent in the PLAN OF PRAYER.

In the PLAN OF ACTION, in turn, passages inspired by twelve-tone thinking emerge as sound sequences that have entered the composition of individual segments. This phenomenon—a fusion of the sonoristic and the twelve-tone techniques—is characteristic of Penderecki's late sonorism of the years 1963-73. It can be discerned in many pieces written after the *Passion*, the most important being *De natura sonoris no. 1* (1966) and *no. 2* (1970), *Dies irae* (1967), the diptych *Utrenia*, consisting of *The Entombment of Christ* (1969-70) and *The Resurrection* (1970-71), and the First Symphony (1972-73).[36] In the *St. Luke Passion*, where this fusion happens for the first time, it is most apparent in segments representing spatial movement. The glissandi employed in earlier sonoristic pieces are here replaced by very swift passages consisting of definite pitches, inspired by twelve-tone thinking though not derived from the rows underlying the PLAN OF PRAYER. A notable exception is the instrumental segment accompanying the Evangelist's account of Christ's death, which immediately precedes the Redeemer's last words on the Cross [25 AB]. Even though, as in the case of other segments of the same kind, its internal pitch structure is not audible, a careful analysis reveals that it is built consistently—and thus consciously—on the B-A-C-H motif in its original and retrograde versions. The reasons for such an elaboration of this segment can only be guessed, the most plausible being that, by using B-A-C-H in this context, Penderecki alluded to the meaning this motif has as a musical symbol of the Cross in works of Johann Sebastian Bach.

A different but equally curious case of weaving the melodic material of the PLAN OF PRAYER into the subsegmental level of the PLAN OF ACTION is the use of the inverted four-note fragment from row 1 in the Crucifixion scene [17]. This manipulation can be properly appreciated only insofar as one knows that these four notes form a phrase identical with the incipit of a Polish church hymn, *Święty Boże*. The text of this hymn constitutes a translation of the supplication, which in the *St. Luke Passion* occurs in Greek (*Hagios o Theos*) and in Latin (*Sanctus Deus*) at the very end of the

[36]Mirka, *The Sonoristic Structuralism of Krzysztof Penderecki*, pp. 343-347.

passacaglia *Popule meus* (please refer back to Table 1). There, however, it is not sung but spoken. The melody of supplication is introduced independently of its text, first in the organ part of the *Popule meus* (136-141) and then in an instrumental passage of the following Crucifixion [17], where it is presented within a dense cluster-like segment in the highest melodic voice, played by violas (Example 13).

Example 13: Melody *Święty Boże*, identical with the inversion of the
first four-note fragment of row 1, woven in a cluster-like segment.
The Crucifixion [17], mm. 10-21

The melody of *Swat Bode* is heard again soon afterwards, at the beginning of the soprano aria *Crux fidelis* [18], played again by the viola, but this time without any accompaniment. It should be expressly emphasized that the incipit of *Swat Bode* is not simply a musical quotation, as usually suggested, but at the same time a melodic element derived from row 1 and identical with its opening four-note phrase, as shown in Example 6.[37] The same phrase occurs in other passages of the piece together with the

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[37]The only commentator who has noticed the derivation of the *Swat Bode* from row 1 is Erhardt; see *Spotkania z Krzysztofem Pendereckim*, p. 85.

four-note fragments derived from rows 2 and 3 as well as with the motif B-A-C-H.[38] Yet, because in those parts it is less exposed, it does not sound as a quotation and therefore has escaped the attention of earlier analysts.

A particular aspect of the interpenetration between the plans of prayer and action in Penderecki's composition concerns the solo voices carrying the utterances of the Passion's main characters: Jesus (baritone) as well as the other *soliloquentes*—Pilate, Peter, the Good Thief (bass), and the Servant (soprano). In shaping their melodic content, the composer has again taken recourse to a twelve-tone thinking devoid of connections with the melodic material of the rows. Yet in this free flow of twelve-tone melody there exists one motif, repeated several times, which constitutes an inversion of the descending-semitone motif that was identified as the most essential melodic element of the PLAN OF PRAYER. In the PLAN OF ACTION this gesture occurs exclusively in the part of Jesus and is always connected there with a single and very significant word or phrase of the text. Most often, this word is *Pater* (Example 14), which Jesus utters during His three prayers to the Father, in the Mount of Olives [2], during the Crucifixion [17], and before His death on the Cross [25].

Pa - - ter   si vis,   Pa - ter

Example 14: *Pater*-motif. Jesus in the Mount of Olives [2], mm. 2-9

In the last scene, the *Pater*-motif is used in inversion, whereby it becomes identical with the semitone motif itself and consequently—and significantly—with the motif *Crux* (please refer back to Example 9). At other times, the same motif occurs with the word *Amen*, in the confirmation of the promise given to the Good Thief [22], and with the phrases affirming the divine dignity of Christ; see *Ego sum*, with which He answers the question of the Sanhedrine, *Tu ergo Filius Dei?* [10], and *Tu dicis*, in answer to Pilate's question, *Tu es rex Iudaeorum?* [13]. Appropriately,

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[38]This is the case in the passacaglia *Popule meus* (184-192), where we hear a very quaint superposition of *Swat Bode* (choir I) with B-A-C-H both in the original (choir II) and in the retrograde (choir III). Earlier, the first four-note fragment of row 1 heard in the *Miserere* (18-21). Yet it is presented there (accompanied by B-A-C-H and by the retrograde of row 2) not in inversion but in its original form, and thus not identical with the incipit of *Swat Bode*.

these last are the only two moments of the Passion when Jesus confirms officially, as it were, His mandate of Messiah.[39]

Prayer as Action

The integration of the plans of action and prayer does not confine itself to the interpenetration of their musical characteristics, however. These two plans literally merge into each other when the action becomes a prayer. As just observed, Jesus prays to His Father three times in the course of the Passion: first in the Mount of Olives, then during the Crucifixion, finally on the cross. Whereas the second of those prayers—a prayer interceding for His executioners—is of lesser importance in the *St. Luke Passion*, the imploring prayers offered by Jesus for His own intention during the spiritual agony in Getsemani and during the physical agony in Golgotha expand into large musical scenes elaborated by Penderecki with a masterly compositional skill and pregnant with theological senses. Being respectively the first and the last scene of the *Passion*, they form an impressive frame of the discussed piece.

*The Agony in the Mount of Olives [2-3]*

In the Gospel of St. Luke, Jesus prays with these words: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done" (Luke 22: 42). In Penderecki's composition, this text and the commentary added to it by the Evangelist lead directly into the baritone aria *Deus meus*. This is the only aria for baritone in the entire *St. Luke Passion*, and its position immediately after the prayer in the Mount of Olives is very meaningful, as it is sung by the very voice which represents Jesus in the PLAN OF ACTION and which, just a while ago, uttered the words of Jesus directed to His Father.

Seen from this angle, *Deus meus* turns out to differ radically from the other arias of the *Passion*. It is not a prayer offered by believer like the arias of soprano and bass, which follow in this respect the model of Bach's passion arias. Rather, it is a prayer of Jesus Himself, and forms part of the action. *Deus meus* is a development of the scene in Getsemani and a continuation of Christ's prayer, in words that have not been written down

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[39]In the tradition of the Old Testament, both the Son of God and the King of Israel are Messianic titles.

by the Evangelist or, more precisely, which other Evangelists recorded in another context. This is supported by the fact that the initial words of this aria, *Deus meus, respice in me, quare me dereliquisti?* (My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?), are those of verse 1 from Psalm 22, with which St. Mark (15: 34) and St. Matthew (27: 46) have Jesus praying on the Cross and which represent one of the two psalm quotations uttered by Jesus during His Passion in all the four Gospels. The quotation here discussed, however, does not occur in St. Luke at all. In order to use it in his *St. Luke Passion*, Penderecki thus took it from a different Gospel and inserted it at a different moment of Christ's Passion.

The special status of the first psalm verse as words of Christ Himself is musically reflected in that it is sung exclusively by the baritone. As has been pointed out, the opening phrase—*Deus meus*— constitutes one of the main melodic themes of the *Passion*. But it is only in this scene that the derivation of this theme is disclosed. *Deus meus* turns out to be an elaboration of *Pater*, the melodic motif of the PLAN OF ACTION that occurs for the first time in the scene of Jesus's prayer in Getsemani. Characteristically, it consists there of the same pitches (A–B♭) that form the core of the motif *Deus meus* in its original presentation at the very beginning of the aria (Example 15). The elaboration of the *Pater*-motif is accomplished in *Deus meus* by adding an initial note g, which allows the composer to deal with the higher number of syllables in the latter phrase.[40]
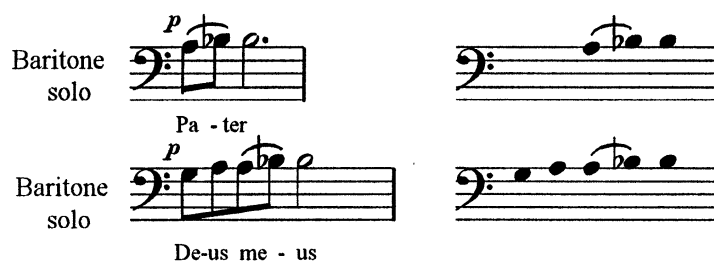
Pa - ter

De-us me - us

Example 15: Derivation of the *Deus meus*-motif from the *Pater*-motif

In the opening section of the aria, based on the first psalm verse, the boys' choir joins the baritone to insert the exclamation *Domine*, which is

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[40]It is interesting that the *Pater*-motif is elaborated in the same way when attached to the longer phrase *Tu dicis* in the scene of Pilate's trial (Example 11). This version is already midway to the motif of *Deus meus*, and the lacking first note E actually occurs in the organ part.

musically set as the harmonic motif discussed earlier and presented here for the first time. What comes to mind in this connection is the passage from St. Paul, "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8: 26).

Although designated as an aria, *Deus meus* features not only the solo of the baritone voice, but also choral parts. The subsequent text, which is excerpted from Psalm 5 and articulates the entreaty, *Verba mea auribus percipe, Domine, intellige clamorem meam* (Incline Thine ears unto my words, O Lord, my plaints consider), marks the beginning of a vast choral section. Because this text never occurs in the Gospels as uttered by Jesus, it is sung not by the baritone (in this section, the baritone enters just once with the initial motif *Deus meus*), but by the mixed choirs and the boys' choir. In light of the storeyed structure of prayer underlying Penderecki's *Passion*, the cooperation of these two choirs is to be interpreted as a combination of two dimensions of prayer: the prayer of Christ imploring His Father to strengthen Him before His Passion and the prayer of the believers beseeching Christ to save them through His Passion. The word-motif *Domine*, which occurs this time not as a textual insertion but as part of the psalm text, is performed here by the combined forces of both the boys' choir and the mixed choirs, in this way bringing together the two versions of its setting distinguished earlier. However, the transposition of this motif, resolving to the minor third E–G, attests to the leading role of the boys' choir as representing the Spirit of Christ, in accordance with these words of St. Paul: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 12: 3).

The text of Psalm 22 is continued in the final section of the aria, where we hear the words *Deus meus, clamabo per diem, et non exaudies* (O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not). The repetition of the initial phrase of verse 1, "Deus meus," at the beginning of verse 2 prompts the composer to avail himself again of the opening theme of the aria. But now, taken over from the baritone part by the boys' and mixed choirs, this theme gains power and expands in the polyphonic texture. The storeyed structure of prayer, characteristic of the central section, is still preserved. Yet, as the phrase *Deus meus* belongs to the words uttered by Christ on the Cross, this structure is made up not only of the choirs here, but includes the baritone voice. Having remarked previously that the roles performed by the baritone and the boys' choir function as two musical representatives of Christ, it is

now interesting to observe the complementary distribution of their parts in the section under consideration. They do not sing simultaneously here (or anywhere else), but the latter takes the lead only after the former has ended.

The closure of the aria, appended after a general pause, forms a kind of coda. It reverts to the opening section by summoning once again the baritone motif *Deus meus* and the exclamation *Domine* sung by the boys' choir.

The Agony on the Cross [25-27]

The scene of the agony in the Mount of Olives is counterbalanced by the scene of Christ's death on the Cross, which eventually leads into the final chorus of the *Passion*. This scene features the prayer of the dying Savior, the baritone's *In manus Tuas commendo spiritum meum* (i.e., Psalm 31: 5), which the boys' choir complements with the phrase *Consummatum est* (please refer back to Example 9).

Although the Gospel text ends here, the music continues. The initial segment of this epilogue, an instrumental interlude [26], is an exact repetition of the opening section of the soprano aria *Crux fidelis* [18] except that the melodic parts originally performed by soprano and flute are turned over to the violas. In this way, the interlude creates a wordless lament. Words recur only together with the beginning of the final chorus, *In Te, Domine, speravi* [27]. Yet before this first line of Psalm 31 is introduced, the composer summons all the melodic themes and motifs assigned earlier to individual parts of the PLAN OF PRAYER. This introductory section of the final chorus (1-11) has often been compared with the opening of the Finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The most important role is performed here by the three solo voices: the baritone and the soprano repeat the melodic motifs of their main arias, *Deus meus* [3] and *Crux fidelis* [18], whereas the bass sings the motif B-A-C-H of the *Miserere* [12]. The recapitulation of the melodic themes also extends to choral parts, as the altos of the first mixed choir perform the initial motifs of the *Stabat Mater* theme. And all these are strung together by the pedal-note D, on which the basses of the second and third choirs sing *In pulverem mortis deduxisti me*.[41]

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[41]This last theme has not been listed among the melodic elements of the *St. Luke Passion* because, as a note repetition, it does not, strictly speaking, posses any melodic character. Yet it occurs already earlier, in the choral part of the PLAN OF PRAYER [20] based on the text of Psalm 22, where it is also heard in the basses and equally performs the function of a pedal point and an axis for higher polyphonic lines.

It is only after that recollection of the earlier themes that Psalm 31 is taken up—the same psalm with whose fifth verse the dying Christ was heard praying just a while ago. The final chorus repeats the Savior's prayer, develops it, and places it in its proper context, that of the complete psalm text. The initial verse of the psalm, *In Te, Domine, speravi* (In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust), is intoned in unison by the boys' choir, thus expressing Christ's trust in His Father. As pointed out earlier, this articulation constitutes the first full presentation of row 3 (see Example 3). In the further course of the chorus this melodic setting of the initial verse returns in the mixed choirs whereby, in turn, it expresses the believers' trust in Christ. The mixed choirs then proceed to sing the subsequent verse of the psalm, *Inclina ad me aurem Tuam, accelera ut eruas me* (Bow down Thine ear to me; deliver me speedily). The musical setting of this passage (20-22) echoes the choral climax, and with it the melodic theme, of the aria *Deus meus* (34-39). This unexpected musical analogy between the first and the last scene enhances their function as frames in the structure of Penderecki's *Passion*.

The subsequent section (23-36) is still founded on the same analogy: the musical setting of the rest of verse 2, *Esto mihi in Deum protectorem et in domum refugii, ut salvum me facias* (Be thou my strong rock, for an house of defense to save me), corresponds with the section of the aria *Deus meus* on the words *Verba mea auribus percipe* (20-27). The corresponding sections are both performed by the mixed choirs, with the motif of the descending semitone as their only melodic element.

The mixed choirs sing the full text of the final chorus, with the significant exception made for the phrase *In manus Tuas commendo spiritum meum* (see Example 16 above).

This verse, quoted earlier by Christ Himself, is reserved for the boys' choir as Christ's *alter ego* and performed in a quasi-recitative manner similar to the plainchant psalm tone, thereby standing out against the otherwise flexible style of the twelve-tone melodies that predominate in the *Passion*. Immediately before this phrase, the psalm incipit *In Te, Domine, speravi* is repeated by the mixed choirs. By way of this direct juxtaposition of praying subjects, the final chorus summarizes the storeyed structure of prayer underlying the conception of the work as a whole, and the text of the prayer ultimately reveals the profound sense of this structure: the believers trust in Christ, who in turn entrusts the Father with His spirit.

Example 16:
Chorus *In Te, Domine, speravi*
[27], mm. 36-39

To interpret this hierarchical situation of trusting, one must refer to the theology of St. John. In his Gospel, the paramount trait of the relation of the Son to the Father is the former's absolute subordination as manifested in His perfect obedience: "The Son can do nothing of himself" (John 5: 19). The fruit of this obedience is His perfect unity with the Father, as expressed by Jesus in this sentence: "I and my Father are one" (John 10: 30). This unusual logic of obedience and unity, subordination and equality between the Son and the Father is explained by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in the following way: "The Son, as a Son and insofar as He is a Son, is nothing by Himself, and thus is something completely one with the Father [...] If there is nothing in which He would be alone, no domain exclusive for Him, then This converges with That and is one with Him."[42]

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[42]Translated from Joseph Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum*, p. 146.

An analogical subordination and obedience should also characterize the relation of a Christian to Christ. This is why Jesus says, in a different passage of the Gospel according to St. John, "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15: 5). As the Son is united with the Father through His obedience, so also a Christian becomes united with Christ when perfectly obedient to His commandments: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15: 10). And, being united with Christ, a Christian is through Him united also with the Father. In the course of the high-priestly prayer—His testament, delivered during the Last Supper immediately before the Passion—Jesus prays for just this unity: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us" (John 17: 21). And it is exactly this unity, obtained through a hierarchical inclusion of the believers in Christ and Christ Himself in God the Father, which constitutes the profound sense of the storeyed structure exhibited in Penderecki's *Passion*. In the center of this structure—as in the center of the history of Salvation—stands Jesus Christ, the only mediator between the believers and the Father, the One who says: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14: 6).

Part IV

The Divine Breath of Wordly Music

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Spiritual Descents and Ascents:
Religious Implications in Pronounced Motion
to the Subdominant and Beyond

Chandler Carter

In his study of musical meaning in the late works of Beethoven, Robert Hated defines, among many other terms, two important concepts for interpreting musical events: *correlation* and *markedness*. Correlation is a "stylistic association between sound and meaning in music; structured by oppositions, and mediated by markedness."[1] Correlations are commonly expressed as topics at the musical surface, whether in the form of fully worked-out pieces (types) or as specific figures and progressions within a piece (styles), as Leonard Ratner demonstrates in his study of music of the late 18th century.[2] Though difficult to define specifically, a more general correlation can also be attributed to phenomena at the deeper level of the musical texture. In this essay, I attempt to describe a potential correlation between a category of harmonic movement—to and from the subdominant or "flat" side of the tonic —and a sense of spiritual descent and ascent.

For such a broadly-defined category of harmonic motion to correlate to a religious or quasi-religious idea, it must be marked in some discernible way. Hatten defines markedness as:

> an asymmetrical valuation of an opposition. [...] Marked entities have
> a greater (relative) specificity of meaning than do unmarked entities.
> Marked entities also have a narrower distribution, which means that
> they tend to occur in fewer contexts, and thus less often than their
> unmarked opposites.[3]

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[1]Robert Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 289.

[2]Leonard Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980), p. 9.

[3]Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, p. 291.

The unmarked opposition to motion to the subdominant side of the harmonic spectrum is motion to the dominant side.

Harmonic Journeys Up and Down the "Sharp" and "Flat" Sides

Almost all music of the Western European common practice—a period ranging from roughly 1700 to 1900—features obligatory large-scale harmonic motion to the dominant (V), whether in the form of a structural modulation or a strongly pronounced chord at an important juncture, such as the end of a development section or a final cadence. Being thus unmarked, harmonic motion to the dominant cannot be said to have a single "meaning." Nonetheless, an association of tension or unrest with motion to the dominant or "sharp" side of the harmonic spectrum underlies virtually all analyses, both hermeneutic *and* formalist, of common-practice music. Building on this association, interpreters have ascribed in certain works, including instrumental works, very specific meanings to the structural motion to the dominant. How we term these specific meanings—whether exhilarating, sublime, exotic, masculine, feminine, alien or even frightening—depends on surface features, such as tempo, rhythm, melody, motive, texture, register, instrumentation or an accompanying text. But whatever meaning is attached to this harmonic motion—be it part of a spiritual *anabasis* in Bach or Beethoven's mighty struggle with the human condition—these interpretations are rooted in the notion that the dominant implies a heightened or energized state. And by extension, structural harmonic motions beyond the dominant to the supertonic (II), submediant (VI), and mediant (III and especially major III♯),[4] with their concurrent chromatic inflections—♯$\hat{1}$, ♯$\hat{5}$ and ♯$\hat{2}$—imply even greater states of tension or unrest. In all of these various manifestations, large-scale motions to the dominant and beyond share not so much a common meaning, but a common impulse or energy.

In examining instances of pronounced motion to the subdominant side of the harmonic spectrum—including regions identified with the subtonic (♭VII), flat submediant (♭VI) and the so-called Phrygian or Neapolitan chord (♭II)— I find a similarly defined common impulse. Specifically, the return to the tonic

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[4] I follow the convention of identifying all chords and tonal regions, whether major or minor, with capital Roman numerals. Unless accompanied by an accidental (either *before* to indicate an altered root or *after* to indicate an altered third) the chord or tonal area is assumed to be diatonic in relation to the key of the piece or movement. Arabic numbers preceded by a circumflex refer to the scale degree.
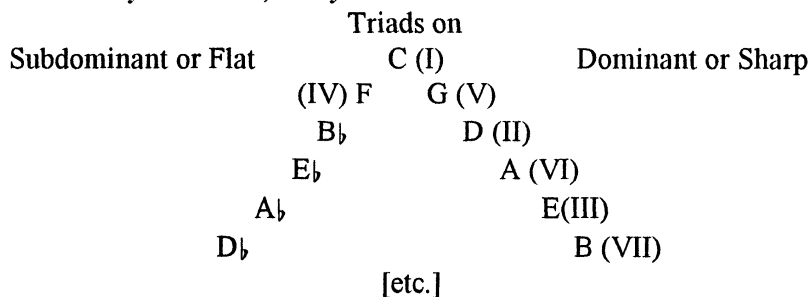
from these journeys to the "flat" side has an energizing effect as opposed to the resolution or relaxation implied by V-I. The fact that there are relatively fewer instances of motion to the flat side adds to the semiotic potential of this category of harmonic movement. This imbalance, as Charles Rosen describes it, establishes a degree of markedness that gives greater impetus to the expressive energy of harmonic motion down this less-traveled path.

Often coupled with atypical—and hence marked—ascending melodic motion rather than descending motion to the final tonic, the harmonic return from the flat side is often used by tonal composers—particularly those of the 19th century, but also J. S. Bach—to convey a sense of spiritual ascent or transcendence. Conversely, it is the harmonic motion to the subdominant and beyond that constitutes a relaxation or release of energy. Hence, such harmonic movement—particularly to the "flattest" regions, ♭VI and ♭II — is often associated with rest, sleep, and even death. Both symbolic and expressive, this meaningful motion to and from flat harmonic regions is found even in works by Renaissance composers like Josquin Desprez and in tonal composers of the twentieth century such as Igor Stravinsky, Ralph Vaughn Williams, and Charles Ives.

In his book *The Classical Style*, Charles Rosen offers a succinct yet enlightening explanation of the "sharp" and "flat" sides of the harmonic spectrum, and in so doing, provides a way of understanding the expressive impulse implied by motion to the subdominant and beyond:

> The tonic [...] may be considered as itself the dominant of the fifth below it, called the subdominant. By building successive triads in both ascending and descending directions, we arrive at a structure which is symmetrical, and yet unbalanced:

	Triads on	
Subdominant or Flat	C (I)	Dominant or Sharp
(IV) F	G (V)	
B♭	D (II)	
E♭	A (VI)	
A♭	E(III)	
D♭	B (VII)	
	[etc.]	

> The structure is unbalanced, because harmonics all rise from a note, and the dominant or sharp direction, based on the successive second overtones of the previous note, outweighs the subdominant direction, which descends. The subdominant weakens the tonic by turning it into a dominant (that is, by using the tonic note not as the root of the

central triad, but as an overtone). This imbalance is essential to an understanding of almost all tonal music, and from it is derived the possibility of tension and resolution on which the art of music depended for centuries. The imbalance can be perceived immediately in the formation of the diatonic major scale (the notes marked with roman numerals above) which uses the root of only one triad in the subdominant direction, but of the first five triads on the sharp or dominant side.[5]

In their standard music theory textbook *Harmony and Voice Leading*, Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter write, "Because motion between IV and I lacks the key-defining power of the V-I progression, plagal cadences have a much more limited function than authentic (V-I) cadences. [...] Emphasis on the subdominant can be very beautiful at the end of a piece, for this chord (a fifth below the tonic) often generates a feeling of repose."[6] Paradoxically, this relaxation constitutes a release of tension that is present in the tonic harmony only in hindsight (or through the introduction of the unstable ♭7), for the tonic is by definition free of the need for resolution. Because a strong subdominant does not create a tension that requires resolution, it does not compel harmonic motion.

To cite a personal experience, once in the context of a beginners' harmony class in which I was introducing full and half cadences (closures on I and V, respectively), a student asked whether a phrase could end on IV. Instead of immediately answering no, I improvised a phrase that ended I-IV. Students agreed that, locally, the ending sounded like a full cadence in the key of the subdominant. The reason there is no such cadence on IV is that it would undermine the tonic rather than expand it, which is how the half cadence on V ultimately functions. I will return to this idea of ending on the subdominant when I discuss the "Heiliger Dankgesang" from Beethoven's A-minor string quartet, op. 132, III.

Pronounced Motion to the Subdominant

The spiritual implications of pronounced motion to the subdominant is perhaps most explicit in two cantata arias by J.S. Bach. The notion that

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[5]Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style* (New York: Norton & Co, 1971), pp. 23-24.

[6]Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, *Harmony and Voice Leading*, 2nd edition (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), p. 182.

Baroque composers attached specific meaning to certain musical gestures is well known. Manfred Bukofzer categorizes such devices as allegory: that is, musical gestures that concretize—and therefore function as a sign of— specific ideas or concepts.[7] Writing about J.S. Bach's extensive use of this technique to express theological concepts and concerns, Eric Chafe extends the notion of allegory beyond commonly recognized surface figurations to underlying tonal relationships: "Allegory expresses the spiritual life, a way of thought in music, [...] as well as in religion, and it is fundamental to my argument that tonality acts as a central, if not the central, means by which music becomes allegorical."[8] Key to Chafe's concept of "tonal allegory" in Bach's music are tonal *catabases* and *anabases*. He writes:

> A pattern of tonal catabasis (descent through the circle of fifths, modulation in the direction of increasing flats) followed by anabasis (ascent; modulation toward increasing sharps) often has a unifying effect on the allegorical detail similar to that of Luther's "analogy of faith" on designative allegory. Bach probably developed the pattern intuitively, rather than as a studied feature of his musical Lutheranism. Nevertheless, indications can be found that Bach fully understood the connection to theology.[9]

Skeptical of ascribing such specific semiotic functions to musical figures, David Schulenberg argues that "musical conventions cannot constitute any-

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[7]Manfred Bukofzer, "Allegory in Baroque Music," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 3 (1939-1940).

[8]Eric Chafe, *Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J.S. Bach* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. vii.

[9]Chafe, *Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J.S. Bach*, p. 15. One major difference between Chafe's interpretation of anabasis and catabasis and my discussion of motion to and from the flat side of the harmonic spectrum is that he emphasizes key relationships between movements of larger works and I only analyze harmonic relationships within movements.

Regarding Bach's "musical Lutheranism," several scholars have attributed expressions of theological concerns in his cantatas and large choral works and even in his instrumental works. On the former, see Scott C. Milner, "The 'blessed death' in the church cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Brandeis University, 1995) and Paul Nettl, *Luther and Music*, trans. Frida Best and Ralph Wood (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967); on the latter, see Michael Marissen, *The Social and Religious Designs of J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concertos* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995) and Carl Schachter, "The Submerged Urlinie: The Prelude from Bach's Suite No. 4 for Violoncello Solo," *Current Musicology* 56 (1994): 54-71. Furthermore, Naomi Cumming in her beautiful essay, "The Subjectivities of 'Erbarme dich'," *Music Analysis* 16/1 (1997): 5-44, examines the subtle means by which listeners may experience the religious elements in Bach's music.

thing so unambiguously denotative as a true 'language of tones'," much less a vocabulary precise enough to convey theology. At best, Schulenberg writes, "They involve a complex system of associations that permits a music figure to be associated with a given idea within a particular musical work."[10]

I take Schulenberg's skepticism seriously, for I am speculating on an expressive impulse that characterizes a general category of harmonic movement and the potential impact that such movement can have on listeners, whether or not they are aware of the allegorical associations. Therefore, I draw a clear distinction between a *musical symbol*—a gesture that has a more abstract or indirect relationship with a word or idea—and *word painting*—a musical gesture that is more directly associated with qualities of a text or extra-musical idea.[11] Both notions are dependent on the listener's appreciation of certain musical conventions, but word painting tends to have a more immediate, even subconscious effect. In other words, a listener need not know the score or be especially schooled in Baroque gestures to appreciate word painting.

Though it is helpful to understand the difference between an abstractly associated musical symbol and the more directly expressive word painting, the distinction may not be as rigid as the two categories imply. Whether or not it is a recognized symbol, every musical gesture has some expressive impact, and if that expressiveness is significant of some extra-musical idea, then it will usually function in conjunction with symbolic content.

Such a mixture of symbolic representation and direct expression can be heard in the melody of the aria "Seligster Erquickungstag" from J.S. Bach's Cantata no. 70, *Wachet, betet*, composed in Weimar in 1716. Bach uses a simple ternary form to paint a stunning contrast between the "blessed day of refreshment" (depicted in the A sections in C major) and the destruction of the world on Judgement Day (painted in section B in A minor). The final line of the first A section, shown in Example 1, ends with the phrase, "guide me to your dwelling." The voice's conventional linear descent to low C in m. 20 is supported by a deceptive cadence. The structural cadence is postponed until

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[10]David Schulenberg, " 'Musical Allegory' Reconsidered: Representation and Imagination in the Baroque," *Journal of Musicology* 12/3 (1995): 218.

[11]This distinction between musical symbol and musical word painting corresponds to Charles Peirce's *symbolic* and *iconic* categories of signs. The symbolic gesture motivates a correlation or interpretation on the basis of convention, habit, or rule. The iconic gesture motivates an interpretation based on similarity, whether of properties or of structure (Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, pp. 294 and 290).

m. 24, where the voice ascends to the higher C. In a practical sense, the registral transference of the structural tonic functions to resolve the upper D from m. 10. But in first descending toward the lower C in mm. 13-20, Bach creates the opportunity for the illusion of a heavenly ascent.

Example 1: J.S. Bach, Cantata no. 70 (*Wachet, betet*), movement 10, "Seligster Erquickungstag," mm. 17-24

In the modified return of the A section, Bach sets the text "Jesus guides me to the stillness, to the point where joy is in abundance." Here the opening motion to the subdominant, shown in Example 2, is more pronounced than in the first A section, so much so that the tonality shifts briefly to F major. The fifth descent flatward to the subdominant at the return of the A section—what Chafe calls a catabasis—and the subsequent fifth ascent sharpward back to the tonic—an anabasis—may be read as another metaphor of heaven-ward ascent (see Example 2 below).[12]

On the face of it, Bach's immediate treatment of the tonic C major as V of F at the beginning of the second A section does not seem unique enough to evoke a specific extra-musical association. But, recalling Rosen's assertion that pronounced motion to the subdominant involves a release of tension, the abrupt resolution of the fiery B section from G major (reinterpreted as V of C major) to V of F major effects a double sense of release. Following the

[12]Bach himself describes his canon "Per tonos" from *The Musical Offering* in just these terms. Above the canon, which features perpetual modulations up a fifth, the composer inscribes: "As the modulation ascends, so may the glory of the king."

Example 2: J.S. Bach, Cantata no. 70 (*Wachet, betet*), movement 10,
"Seligster Erquickungstag," mm. 52-56

metaphor of descent, this transition feels like an elevator that drops two floors instead of the expected one. The subsequent sense of calm and relaxation is strongly reinforced by the concomitant relaxation of tempo from *Presto* to *Adagio*, as well as the setting of the word "Stille." But the release of tonal tension through two descents of a fifth (G to C and C to F) also contributes profoundly to the expressive impact of the music. As at the end of the first A section, Bach's final phrase after the structural cadence in measure 64 also features a linear ascent to the higher C.

There is a similar yet even more pronounced release of tension flatward toward the subdominant and a subsequent tonal ascent sharpward up to the tonic in the aria "Es ist vollbracht" from Cantata no. 159, *Sehet, wir gehn hinauf gen Jerusalem*. This aria follows a binary form with intermittent ritornellos. The A section embodies the relief of having endured the great pain of sin and life, reflected in the quiet, sustained strings. This orchestral "halo" effect is also used by Bach to accompany each utterance made by Jesus in the *St. Matthew Passion*, a work composed around the same time as Cantata 159, in 1729. In "Es ist vollbracht," the orchestral "halo" underlines the several statements of the aria's title, which quotes Christ's final words as recorded in the Gospel of John (and which inspired a moving aria of the same title for alto in the *St. John Passion*). In the B section, the comforting glow of the sustained strings gives way to a more active counterpoint between oboe and first violin. The singer leads the way with a melisma on the phrase "Now will I hasten to give thanks to my Jesus." This textural agitation is coupled with a sudden modulation from the tonic B♭ major to G minor. The quickened

harmonic and melodic activity is briefly brought to rest on the singer's words "Welt, gute Nacht" at m. 39 in C minor. The end of the singer's phrase is beautifully undermined by the A♭ (ˆ♭6) in the bass in m. 40, shown in Example 3a. Even more than IV, ♭VI creates a profound sense of relaxation, as I shall explore later in this essay. This harmonic motion, coupled with the abrupt reduction of rhythmic activity, evokes a sense of sleep.

The singer immediately returns to G minor at m. 42 and resumes the hastening sixteenths in a longer, more agitated melisma which is again brought to rest on the phrase "Welt, gute Nacht," this time in G minor, shown in Example 3b. The deceptive cadence that corresponds to the earlier motion to A♭ now leads to E♭, which functions as IV within the larger B♭ major tonality of the work. In both passages, Bach further underlines the relaxation of melodic motion on the phrase by bringing back the sustained upper strings as well as the oboe's ritornello melody.

Example 3a: J.S. Bach, Cantata no. 159 (*Sehet, wir gehn hinauf gen Jerusalem*), movement 4, "Es ist vollbracht," mm. 39-42

Example 3b: J.S. Bach, Cantata no. 159 (*Sehet, wir gehn hinauf gen Jerusalem*), movement 4, "Es ist vollbracht," mm. 48-51

This concurrence of a deceptive harmonic motion and the orchestral "halo" effect strongly marks the setting of "Welt, gute Nacht." The aria's protagonist, like Simeon in the aria "Schlummert ein" from Cantata 82, embraces death through the metaphor of sleep, reflecting a central theme of Lutheran theology: the so-called "sleep of death." In his *Lecture on Psalm 90*, Martin Luther writes:

> [... F]rom the beginning of the world to the end of the world God has never deserted His own. Adam, Eve, patriarchs, prophets, pious kings are asleep in this Dwelling Place. If, as I believe, they have not yet risen with Christ, their bodies are indeed at rest in the grave, but their life is hidden with Christ in God and will be revealed in glory on the Last Day. [...] This entire time since the beginning of man's creation will seem to Adam, when he arises from the dead, as though he had slept only one hour.[13]

[13]Luther, *Lecture on Psalm 90*, quoted in Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 416 notes 50 and 52.

Given that the original Lutheran congregants would have heard sermons explicating Luther's interpretation, it is not difficult to imagine how this music could evoke—at least for its original listeners—something more theologically complex than the simple metaphor of restful sleep.

Following the second and final relaxation of texture on the G-minor statement of "Welt, gute Nacht" in m. 49, the singer repeats the text, this time ascending to the upper Db in m. 51 and momentarily steering the harmony toward Ab major. Bidding a final "Good night" to the world, the singer, through a lower-register D, gently guides the harmony to what seems like the final cadence on Eb in m. 54, shown in Example 4.

Example 4: J. S. Bach, Cantata no. 159 (*Sehet, wir gehn hinauf gen Jerusalem*), movement 4, "Es ist vollbracht," mm. 53-58

The pedal E♭ undergirds a repetition of the aria's opening phrase, which brings the singer up from the comfortable rest of E♭ major to a cadence on B♭ in measure 58. The motion to B♭ is supported only by a second-inversion VII^7, rather than a structural V-I. This unusual cadential-bass motion up a fifth from E♭ to B♭ parallels earlier cadences in mm. 42 and 51; these appear bracketed at the ends of Examples 3a and 3b. Here, the cadences on C minor and G minor are preceded locally by a dominant-seventh chord in the third inversion V rather than the more emphatic root-position V^7. The dominant-seventh chord in the third inversion with the seventh in the bass usually resolves to I^6, with the bass moving down by half-step (4-3). But instead of ^4 in the bass resolving characteristically down to I^6, the bass moves up a fifth to a root-position tonic. Thus, in each of these cadences—m. 42 in C minor, m. 51 in G minor, and m. 58 in B♭ major—Bach greatly weakens the structural dominant. Bach is the only composer I have encountered who resolves a third-inversion V^7 into the root position of I. The bass motion therefore resembles IV-I more that it does a structural V-I. This is as close as a composer can come to ending on a plagal cadence without actually doing so. Hence one can connect this unique variant of V-I to the later use of plagal cadences by the Romantics.

One senses this lack of a true dominant even more strongly in the cadence on B♭ in m. 58, so much so that it seems like a half cadence in the key of E♭, rather than a full cadence in B♭. The prior cadence on E♭ in m. 54 and the subsequent pedal emphasize the subdominant. The return to the original tonic B♭ requires an anabasis—a sharpward ascent up a fifth.

As in the Cantata 70 aria, one senses this ascent locally as well. Coming out of the cadence in E♭, the returning oboe melody parallels the background anabasis. The first half of the phrase, which at the beginning of the aria guides the harmony downward through the A♭ toward the subdominant, now reaffirms tonic E♭. The inverted answer lifts the harmony through A to what one experiences locally as the dominant B♭. There is strong evidence to suggest that this oboe melody functions not only as a unifying motif, but as a musical *symbol* as well. Bach preserves the inversional relationship between the two halves of the phrase in nearly every one of its 13 occurrences. A similar exact inversion is featured in one of Bach's allegorical canons, the secret meaning of which is provided in the composer's metaphysical inscription: "Symbolum. Christus Coronabit Crucigeros" (Symbol. Christ will crown the crossbearers).

According to Chafe, the inversion in the canon "Christ Crowns the Crossbearers," along with several other musical oppositions, symbolizes the

paradoxical coupling of Death and Resurrection in the Cross of Christ, which was for Luther (and of course for Bach) the foundation of all hope for Salvation. Chafe asserts that the musical procedures of the canons "represent a microcosm of the allegorical devices of baroque musical style."[14] Therefore, the conspicuous inversion featured in the oboe melody in "Es ist vollbracht" may likewise be understood to *symbolize* the Cross of Christ. By itself, this inversion is perhaps too abstract to conjure up a Baroque affect, but coupled with the quotation of Christ's final words, which the motif recalls, and the word painting of the orchestral "halo," this music nonetheless captures both expressively and symbolically the Salvation of the Cross.

As Example 4 shows, the inversion of the cross motif also carries the singer back up to a high E♭ in m. 57, which ultimately functions not as a tonic, but as ^4. The ascent to the higher register betrays the finality of the earlier cadence. These various ascents—the registral ascent to E♭, the chromatic ascent from A♭ to A, and the harmonic ascent from E♭ to B♭—evoke the image of the soul ascending from its earthly rest heavenward through the Salvation of the Cross, which is musically symbolized by the inverted motif and colored by the halo of sustained strings.

It is no coincidence that "Seligster Erquickungstag" and "Es ist vollbracht" share a harmonic structure with pronounced emphasis on the subdominant harmony. In both cases, the harmonic motion up a fifth to the tonic helps create the sense of a heavenly ascent at a level of musical structure deeper than the surface melodies that are more commonly ascribed such a signifying role.

Extended Plagal Cadences

While Bach certainly de-emphasizes the structural dominant in these arias, he does not omit it altogether, nor do his strong subdominants supercede the structural V. This latter possibility, which functions as an extension of the plagal cadence, is a significant feature in numerous romantic works.[15] I

[14]Chafe, *Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J.S. Bach*, p. 15.

[15]Discussions of the plagal cadence in late romantic works are found in Deborah J. Stein, *Hugo Wolf's Lieder and Extensions of Tonality* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985); Heather Platt, "Unrequited Love and Unrealized Dominants," *Intégral* 7 (1993): 119-148 (in reference to two songs by Brahms); and Joseph Kraus in "Love Forever Lost: Musical Expression and the Plagal Domain in Two Songs from Tchaikovsky's *Six Romances*, op. 28," paper read at the Arnold Schoenberg Institute/Music Theory Society of New York State Joint Meeting, Columbia University, 1991.

emphasize that I am not referring here to the conventional plagal cadence (IV-I), which is a brief embellishment of the tonic after the structural V-I, though this common cadence can definitely convey a religious message. Because the plagal cadence has a distinct association with the concluding "Amen" to a hymn, it thus constitutes a meaningful topic. This is the case even in instrumental works, such as at the final cadence of the fourth movement of Schumann's Symphony no. 2. The listener can easily hear a reference to "Amen" in this conclusion, especially given the conspicuous presence of chorales (including a specific quote of Bach) and other music throughout the symphony.[16]

Rather than a conventional plagal cadence, the pronounced motion that is the topic of this essay entails either the supplanting of V by IV in the final cadence of a work. Cadences of this type conclude, in one way or another, almost all of Wagner's mature operas, and in each case, the dramatic action ends with some sort of redemptive death. Even though only half of these works convey a specifically religious ideal, many observers nonetheless find a strong sense of spiritual transcendence common to all of Wagner's operas. Love that is denied in this world—by a curse (*Der fliegende Holländer*), a lover's weakness (*Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*) or the sanction of society (*Götterdämmerung* and *Tristan und Isolde*)—finds fulfillment in an afterlife—in the mystical union of lovers, in Christian Redemption, or in the prosperity of the generations to follow. In each case, the opera concludes with a (usually minor) IV-I, often with a melodic ascent to the final tonic rather than the paradigmatic descent ^2-^1. *Tristan und Isolde* concludes IV♭-I in B major with ^4 ascending to ^5 (E-F♯); *Götterdämmerung* ends IV♭-I in D♭ major with the upper voice also leading from ^4 to ^5 (G♭ to A♭); *Parsifal* concludes IV-I in A♭ major in which IV is tonicized. *Die Meistersinger*, a notable exception among Wagner's operas in its comic tone and happy ending, also concludes with a IV-I in C major. Though because this progression immediately follows a structural V-I, it functions as a conventional plagal cadence, like the conclusion of Schumann's Symphony no. 2. The final IV-I in *Lohengrin* (D minor progressing to A major) is also preceded by a strong V-I at Lohengrin's final words. But in this case, a very important dramatic action—Elsa's death—lends weight to the ultimate plagal cadence.

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[16]John Daverio discusses the musical elements that give Schumann's symphony a quasi-religious tone in *Robert Schumann: Herald of a "New Poetic Age"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), esp. pp. 316-322.

The three Wagner operas that conclude with conventional cadences seem to confirm the notion that Wagner reserves the IV-I cadence to express transcendence. They are: *Das Rheingold*, which ends V^7-I in D♭ major; *Siegfried*, which ends V^7-I in C major; and , *Die Walküre*, which concludes with a structural V-I in E major. None of these operas are dramatic conclusions in themselves, but rather the "prologue" and second and third "acts" of the four-part *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

Another example of this romantic quest for redemption is Brahms's *Rhapsody* for alto voice, men's chorus, and orchestra, op. 53, a setting of three verses from Goethe's "Harzreise in Winter." The final strophe that Brahms chooses to set makes this spiritual dimension explicit:

> If there is in your Psalter,
> Father of Love, a melody
> That can reach his ear,
> Revive his heart![17]

Brahms achieves a distinctly religious tone by concluding with a plagal cadence—set to the same verb "erquicken" (to refresh or revive) that also appears in the conclusion of Bach's Cantata 70 aria, "Seligster Erquickungs-tag." As in the aforementioned Wagner cadences, a sense of transcendence is reinforced by the soloist's ascent to the tonic from ^6 (shown below in Example 14). However, as expressive as it is, this plagal cadence is only the final punctuation to a remarkable harmonic journey through flat harmonies in the final eighteen measures of the *Rhapsody*. I will return to these measures in my concluding analysis.

Brahms also wrote several more conventionally sacred choral works (as well as his *Vier ernste Gesänge*, the fourth of which I will also discuss later). Among these pieces, one prominent example where a plagal cadence completely subsumes the structural V-I is "Lass dich nur nichts nicht dauren" (Let nothing cause you regret), op. 30. Composed as a strict double canon, this short exhortation to stand firm and follow God's will arrives at an understated structural cadence in m. 52: a step from a first-inversion V^7 to I in E♭ major over a tonal pedal, shown in Example 5a. A fifteen-measure "Amen," also composed over a tonic pedal, follows, during which E♭ major is transformed into V of IV via the introduction of ^♭7 (D♭) in the bass. The pull of D♭ down to C (the bass of a IV⁶) competes with the need to re-establish

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[17]From Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Harzreise in Winter," trans. William Mann in liner notes for *Brahms Alto Rhapsody*. Christa Ludwig and the Philharmonia Orchestra, cond. Otto Klemperer. Angel 35923.

the tonic E♭ via natural ^7 (D). Typically, Brahms disguises his harmonic intentions to the very end, juxtaposing both D♭ and D in leading to the final IV-I, as shown in Example 5b. The ever-present tonic pedal leaves no doubt as to the ultimate tonality of the piece, but the thirteen-measure expansion of V/IV warmly prepares the uplifting plagal ending.[18]

Example 5a: Brahms, *Lass dich nur nichts nicht dauren*, op. 30, mm. 51-54

Example 5b: Brahms, *Lass dich nur nichts nicht dauren*, op. 30, mm. 65-67

[18]Interestingly, only the second movement of Brahms's most famous sacred work, *A German Requiem*, concludes IV-I, and even this cadence follows a conventional structural V-I which occurs thirty-five measures from the end.

Romantic composers' predilection for plagal cadences, even in contexts that are not specifically religious, is part of the general Romantic tendency to express through music a religious or quasi-religious spirituality. As contrasting as their styles are, Wagner and Brahms both embody this tendency, through epic dramas (both Christian and non-Christian) in the former and through deeply personal expressions in songs and orchestral works in the latter. As for all things Romantic in music, Beethoven anticipates the same tendency, especially in his late-period works. One of his most explicit personal expressions is the "Heiliger Dankgesang," the third movement of the String Quartet in A minor, op. 132. Having composed this movement after a serious illness during April 1825, Beethoven gave it the subtitle "Holy Song of Thanksgiving by a Convalescent to the Divinity, in the Lydian Mode."

The archaic choice of mode and contrapuntal style—like other works of Beethoven from this period, a clear reference to the modal style of Palestrina—sets the movement apart from its Classical surroundings. But it could never be mistaken for true modal counterpoint. Beethoven's stubborn avoidance of the B♭s which would conventionally establish F major as the tonic creates—at least to my ear—a movement in C major that constantly returns to the subdominant F major, rather than a movement in F Lydian. Composed in alternation with a D-major Andante (subtitled "Feeling New Strength"), the first two "Lydian" Adagios skirt the question of the ultimate tonal center through a deceptive progression from G major (V in C major) to A major (V of the following D major). The third and final Adagio confirms C major as the ultimate governing tonality of this poignant thanksgiving hymn. The climactic G (^5) over C major in m. 192 descends conventionally to a full cadence on the tonic C major in m. 200, shown in Example 6a. The F major that follows functions not as a resolution to the tonic F, but the beginning of what sounds like a plagal expansion of C major. The return to F (^4) in m. 208, shown in Example 6b, ascends above the final C major much like the melodic ascents in the plagal cadences by Wagner and Brahms. But here the sense of transcendence is even greater, for not only does the melody rise above ^1, but the tonic harmony yields to the unresolved subdominant. The two-measure conclusion in the higher octave stabilizes F major. Like the I-IV cadence that I improvised for freshman harmony students, the need to resolve Beethoven's concluding F major dissipates, at least locally, as the previous C major is retroactively heard as a dominant. But in the larger harmonic context, the F-major conclusion is not heard as a resolution, but as awaiting its ultimate transcendence to the tonic.

Example 6a: Beethoven, String Quartet in A minor, op. 132, 3rd movement,
mm. 199-201

Example 6b: Beethoven, String Quartet in A minor, op. 132, 3rd movement,
mm. 207-210

Following Rosen's assertion that the "subdominant weakens the tonic by turning it into a dominant," progressive steps flatward in the circle of fifths would then further weaken the tonic. Examples of such harmonic movement confirm this hypothesis, and there is likewise evidence that composers often employ this weakening of the tonic to express a religious or spiritual message.

Beyond the Subdominant: ♭VII

The next stop after the subdominant on the journey flatward is ♭VII or the subtonic. Other than as V of III in minor, his chord is rarely heard in common practice tonal works. The reasons for this rarity are tied to the very foundation of tonal practice: the resolution of the leading tone to the tonic. The subtonic simply does not lead strongly to the tonic. Yet for this very reason, modern tonal composers, in either emulating modal harmony or simply mitigating the pull of the tonic, frequently use ♭VII as a substitute for the structural V.

But ♭VII is not an expressively neutral substitute for the conventional V. A tonic approached by ♭VII loses much of its sense of inevitability. Also, contrary to the sense that V resolves down to I—literally so in the melodic ^2 to ^1—♭VII nearly always resolves up (and even when it does not, as in the

final cadence of the "Alcotts" movement of Ives's Second Piano Sonata, one hears the progression as an upward resolution). This relatively weak ascending cadential motion conveys a profoundly different effect than the conventional V-I. The final tonic, if not a surprise, at least feels like newly-gained territory.

This latter scenario is actually the case in one of the more famous ♭VII-I cadences: the G-major conclusion of the first movement of Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, shown in Example 7. G major is never heard elsewhere in this predominantly E-Phrygian movement, though in his own inimitable way, Stravinsky makes the presence of G felt by quadrupling it in the opening E-minor chord. Though unexpected, the close on G major is nonetheless intense due to the full orchestration, loud dynamics, and the A♭-to-G voice leading in the bass. In contrast to the bass line's strongly-directed half-step descent, the chorus' unison whole-step ascent from F to G is seemingly achieved by an act of will. This sense of a mighty struggle aptly reflects the psalm text: "O spare me, that I may recover strength: before I go hence, and be no more."[19]

Example 7: Stravinsky, *Symphony of Psalms*, 1st movement, cue 13, mm. 5-7

In contrast to the conclusion to the first movement, Stravinsky achieves a profound serenity in the unison B♭-C (^♭7-^1) cadence that concludes the final movement of the symphony. In this instance, ^♭7 is given no real harmonic support; the C-major arpeggio in the low strings simply anticipates the final chord. Also stated at the beginning of the movement, this spare

[19]King James translation.

cadence both times follows the rising "Alleluia" which seems to float up from the chorus. In his own emotionally reserved manner, Stravinsky offers here a variation on the Romantic theme of transcendence, presented in the form of a hymn of praise sent up to God.

A more traditionally Romantic sense of transcendence is achieved in the elaborate concluding ♭VII-I of Ralph Vaughn Williams's "Easter" from the *Five Mystical Songs*, settings of religious poems by George Herbert for baritone, chorus, and orchestra. Set to the words "Rise heart, thy Lord is risen," the opening leap of a fourth, shown in Example 8a, is a typical example of text painting through a gesture on the melodic surface. But Vaughn Williams conveys a more profound sense of the text in the song's orchestral postlude, shown in Example 8b (below). After the chorus descends softly to the tonic E♭, the orchestra expands D♭ major (♭VII) via an octave ascent through the octatonic scale (alternating half and whole steps), colored by a succession of distantly-related chords. As much as his harmonic syntax differs from Bach, Vaughn Williams's beautiful concluding ascent nonetheless bears an unmistakable family resemblance to the German master's conclusion to "Seligster Erquickungstag" from Cantata 70 (shown above in Example 2).

As with the plagal cadences employed by the Romantics, the spiritual implications of the ♭VII-I cadence are strongly determined by, but not entirely dependent on, the setting of a text or dramatic situation. To demonstrate this point, I turn to an instrumental work that, along with the composer's accompanying essay, conveys an implicit message supported by the harmonic structure: the third movement of Charles Ives's Second Piano Sonata, subtitled "Concord Mass., 1840-60." This movement, itself subtitled "The Alcotts," is a musical portrait of the household of Bronson Alcott, a leader of the New England Transcendentalist movement and the father of the novelist Louisa May Alcott. Ives makes no secret of his extra-musical intentions in writing this movement:

> We won't try to reconcile the music sketch of the Alcotts with much besides the memory of that home under the elms—the Scotch songs and the family hymns that were sung at the end of each day—though there may be an attempt to catch something of that common sentiment [...]—a strength of hope that never gives way to despair—a conviction in the power of the common soul which, when all is said and done, may be as typical as any theme of Concord and its Transcendentalists.[20]

[20]Charles Ives, *Essays Before a Sonata* (New York: Norton & Co., 1962), p. 48.

Example 8a: Vaughn Williams, *Five Mystical Songs*, "Easter," mm. 2-4

Example 8b: Vaughn Williams, *Five Mystical Songs*, "Easter," mm. 81-87

Ives's Concord Sonata is perhaps the most explicit attempt by a composer to embody solely in music a sense of spiritual transcendence. His essays written to accompany the sonata are full of the references to this idea. He ascribes to the old house that is the subject of his musical sketch

a kind of spiritual sturdiness underlying its quaint picturesqueness
[...] a value that seems to stir a deeper feeling, a stronger sense of
being nearer some perfect truth than a Gothic cathedral or an
Etruscan villa. All around you, under the Concord sky, there still
floats the influence of that human faith melody, transcendent and
sentimental enough for the enthusiast or the cynic respectively,
reflecting an innate hope [...][21]

The final cadence of "The Alcotts," shown in Example 9a, perfectly
captures the simple transcendence that Ives describes in his essay. The move-
ment culminates in a majestic C-major restatement of the opening hymn-like
theme—a theme that also alludes to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, which
Alcott's daughter Beth supposedly "played at" on the piano. Just as Ives
reaches the melodic denouement, he undercuts the sturdy C major with a B♭-
major triad.[22] Unlike the previous examples of ♭VII-I cadences, the final tonic
here arrives as a resolution down a seventh rather than up a second. It is as if
the tonic were still an idealized state, but, unlike those of Bach, Wagner,
Vaughn Williams, or Stravinsky, one that is firmly rooted in earthly things.
xxx   The final cadence is not the first appearance of B♭ major in this move-
ment. In fact, "The Alcotts" begins with a B♭-major setting of the hymn-like
theme, which is itself undercut by subtonic A♭ major, shown in Example 9b.
The continuation of the A♭-major triad under the B♭-major theme is a
interesting adaptation of tonal practice. The hymn theme is tonally burdened
by the mildly dissonant ♭VII. The weighty subtonic harmony can be shaken off
only through the more intensely chromatic and rhythmically freer transition
to the second theme in E♭ major. An even greater effort is required to reach the
final tonic, C major. Only hinted at in the tense C minor passage just before
the second theme, the concluding C major emerges like the summit of
mountain that comes into view just before it is reached. By beginning in a key
that ultimately functions as subtonic (B♭ major), Ives gives the final tonic a
vitality and freshness that it otherwise would not have had.

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[21]Ives, *Essays Before a Sonata*, p. 47.

[22]I should note that C major is established through a very conventional V^7-I progression. The
concluding ♭VII-I thus functions locally more like a plagal expansion of the tonic rather than
a structural V-I.

Example 9a: Ives, Piano Sonata no. 2, "Concord, Mass., 1840-60,"
3rd movement, "The Alcotts," final cadence

Example 9b: Ives, Piano Sonata no. 2, "Concord, Mass., 1840-60,"
3rd movement, "The Alcotts," opening hymn-like theme

Visions of Another World: ♭VI

After ♭VII on the flat side of the harmonic spectrum come the flat mediant (♭III) and the flat submediant (♭VI). Diatonic in minor keys, ♭III and ♭VI are strong poles of attraction, especially the former, which usually substitutes for V as a second key area in Classical works in the minor mode. However, for the purposes of this essay, I will discuss instances of these chords only within major-key works, for only under such exceptional circumstances are they sufficiently marked to signify a special meaning. Furthermore, I will also omit a discussion of ♭III, for though this harmony can occur as a key area in its own right in a major-key work, it usually functions as V of ♭VI.

Even more than IV, ♭VI undermines the harmonic sovereignty of the tonic. Just as the tonic is heard as the second pitch in the overtone series above IV, it is the more distant fourth overtone in the series above ♭VI. Also, I and ♭VI bear no direct functional relationship to each other. One can slip easily from

one to the other via smooth voice-leading: ^5- ^♭6 and ^3- ^♭3.[23] Perhaps because of this lack of a clear functional relationship to the tonic, ♭VI is not used in a conventional cadence, except to lead to the dominant.[24] Consequently, the arrival of ♭VI, while accomplished with little or no fanfare, is usually not expected. The composer can quickly and easily move to this distant harmony or key without so much as an applied dominant, lending the ♭VI a subtle but distinctly alien quality.

An alien world that is often evoked by motion to ♭VI is that of the grave. Josquin Desprez's motet *Absalon, fili mi* (ca. 1500), probably the earliest example of what in tonal music is known as ♭VI, evokes King David's desire to die in place of his deceased son, Absalon. In this harmonically bold passage, shown in Example 10, Josquin beautifully paints the text "sed descendam in infernum plorans" (but descend, weeping, to the underworld) with falling thirds sung in canon by the four voices. The sequential pattern guides the harmony down the circle of fifths from B♭ major through E♭, A♭, D♭

Example 10: Josquin Desprez, *Absalon, fili mi*, mm. 60-68

[23]Richard Cohn discusses the functionally marginal relationship between triads related by a third in his "Maximally Smooth Cycles, Hexatonic Systems, and the Analysis of Late-Romantic Triadic Progression," *Music Analysis* 15/1 (1996): 9-40.

[24]In some minor tonal works of the twentieth-century, ♭VI ascends to the final tonic via ♭VII.

and finally G♭ major, at which point the pattern breaks for a cadence in the original key.

As I pointed out in my previous analysis, Bach also uses ♭VI (though in the context of minor keys) to subtly evoke a restful death in mm. 40 and 49 of "Es ist vollbracht" (refer back to Examples 3a and 3b). Schubert's use of ♭VI to evoke Christ's earthly life and death in the "Credo" movement of his *Mass* in A♭ major makes a bolder, if somewhat muddled impression.[25] From tonic C major, Schubert slips into A♭ major for the *Grave* middle section of the movement, a setting of the text from "Et incarnatus est" through "passus et sepultus est." Even within the key of A♭, the harmonic progressions are strangely disorienting. The second phrase of the section ("ex Maria virgine"), shown in Example 11, cadences on ♭III (C♭ major)—one of the few instances where ♭III does not lead to ♭VI—before being wretched into V of F major. The harmony gradually steers its way back to A♭ major (with traces of minor) before the brusque, but exhilarating return to C major at "Et resurrexit."

Example 11: Schubert, *Mass* in A♭ major, "Credo," mm. 130-139

[25]Schubert's works both with and without a text often feature ♭VI. Deborah Kessler examines this latter practice in "Schubert's late three-key expositions: Influence, design and structure" (Ph.D diss. City University of New York, 1996), and ties ♭VI with the dramatic figure of Death in "The Maiden's Struggle and Ist Tonal Aftermath in the First Movement of Schubert's D-Minor Quartet," *The TASI (The American Schubert Institute) Journal* 1: 27-36.

Schubert's anabasis from ♭VI to I recalls Bach's more traditional anabasis at the parallel spot in his own Mass in B minor. Set in E minor throughout (with a famous, chromatically descending ground bass), Bach 's "Crucifixus" cadences in G major before ascending up a fifth to D major for the "Et resurrexit." Though chromatic, Bach's functionally-based harmonic movement never obscures the tonal hierarchy between the consecutive sections. Conversely, Schubert's large-scale harmonic motion from I to ♭VI and back to I calls into question the functional status of the tonic C major. This is especially the case in the context of the entire Mass, since the C-major "Credo" follows an E-major "Gloria," which itself follows an A♭-major "Kyrie." The tonic of each movement is undercut by ♭VI in the next, a succession of keys that divides the octave equally, and therefore projects no clear hierarchy. Applied sparingly, large-scale harmonic motion to ♭VI can create the sense of another world. But Schubert's successive use of a cycle of ♭VIs (A♭-E-C-A♭), later adopted in a more radical guise by composers like Liszt, severely undermines the tonal integrity of a given movement or section. The listener does not know which world is familiar and which is strange, an emotional dilemma that later atonal expressionists eventually put to good use.

Brahms finds a more stable balance between the vague other-worldliness of ♭VI and the clarity of I in the last of his *Vier ernste Gesänge*, op. 121, a setting of the well-known passage from I Corinthians 13:1-3 and 12-13. The first three verses, which establish the preeminence of love over other worldly attributes, are presented in a modified strophic form set in E♭ major. In verse 12, the text shifts focus to a vaguely discerned vision of the enlightenment that love offers:

> For now we see through a mirror, dimly;
> But then we will see face to face.
> Now I know only in part;
> Then I will know fully,
> Even as I have been fully known.[26]

Coupled with changes in tempo (*Andante* to *Adagio*), meter (4/4 to 3/4), and texture (jagged octave leaps to smoothly arpeggiated triplets), Brahms's tonal shift to ♭VI (spelled as B major) for this verse stands in serene contrast to the boisterous setting of the first three verses. Unlike Schubert in his Mass setting, Brahms avoids jumping abruptly from E♭ to B major. Instead he briefly modulates in the final phrase of the previous section, shown in

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[26]Oxford New Revised Standard translation.

Example 12a. The half cadence on V of C♭ in m. 47 gently reveals the vision the world enlightened by love. The modulation back to E♭, shown in Example 12b, is not so smooth. Reinterpreting the tonic B[7] as a German augmented-sixth chord, Brahms returns abruptly to a B♭-major chord (V in the original key), as well as to the original tempo, meter, and texture for the enunciation of "faith, hope, and love." The serene texture, rhythm, and meter of that other-worldly vision returns in m. 83 in the final setting of "but love is the greatest among them," but this time in the home key of E♭. Without being in the key of ♭VI, this final evocation of love alludes to, but does not immerse the listener in that earlier utopian vision.

Example 12a: Brahms, *Vier ernste Gesänge*, op. 121, no. 4
("Wenn ich mit Menschen- und mit Engelzungen redete"), mm. 46-48

Example 12b: Brahms, *Vier ernste Gesänge*, op. 121, no. 4
("Wenn ich mit Menschen- und mit Engelzungen redete"), mm. 74-76

Near the Point of No Return: ♭II

Through text, tempo, and musical texture, Brahms turns ♭VI, a harmony often used to paint the specter of death, into a haven of love. Harmonic motion to ♭II is usually not so expressively ambiguous. Usually functioning as a chromatic alteration of the dominant preparation chord II⁶, the so-called Neapolitan sixth chord carries a long-standing and widely acknowledged association with death, which dates back to the 17th century.[27] Mozart, in particular, puts the chord to especially expressive use in his operas, where it is usually associated with profound despair and even self-destruction. Pamina's aria "Ach, ich fühl's," her later quartet with the three spirits in which she attempts suicide, and Papageno's so-called "Suicide" aria are but three examples of many.[28] Along the same line, Schubert's use of ♭II⁶ in the song "Der Müller und der Bach" from *Die Schöne Müllerin* hints at the miller's eminent suicide.

This association of ♭II with violent despair is tied to the profoundly disorienting effect of ˆ♭2 on the stability of tonic. It is not necessarily the case that ˆ♭2 is so unstable as to require resolution to ˆ1, but potentially the other way around. Once this foreign tone is introduced, it exerts a pull of its own, even threatening to turn the original ˆ1 into a leading tone. (Such a situation, in fact, happens briefly in the final measures of the Queen of the Night's aria "Der Hölle Rache" from *Die Zauberflöte*.) Far from being a dissonant chord, ♭II is potentially too consonant. After the strangely alluring ♭II is sounded, it is the V with its harsh leading tone that sounds dissonant.

More than destruction and despair, ♭II in these examples reflects a loss of rational control that the conventions of tonal practice so aptly embody. Perhaps for this reason, Classical composers tend to avoid ♭II in sacred works except in the most extreme cases, and when employing it almost always restrict it to the context of minor (Mozart's quickly passing ♭II⁶ in m. 28 of the "Dies Irae" of his *Requiem* is a case in point). Perfect for expressing intense operatic emotions, the sudden alien sound of ♭II is too de-stabilizing, even subversive for solemn religious works.

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[27]For a comprehensive discussion of this association, see William Kimmel, "The Phrygian Inflection and the Appearances of Death in Music," *College Music Symposium* 20/2 (1980): 42-76.

[28]For further examples, see Roger Kamien, "Aspects of the Neapolitan sixth chord in Mozart's Music" in *Schenker Studies*, Hedi Siegel, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 94-106.

However, when gradually prepared—as when Brahms modulates to ♭VI in op. 121, no. 4 (refer back to Example 12a)—♭II is not such an unsettling shock. Romantic composers, as we have seen, tend to linger on flat harmonies for their own rich color. In his A-major setting of "Christe" in the "Kyrie" movement of the *Requiem*, shown in Example 13, Verdi prepares a root-position ♭II (B♭ major) with ♭VI (F major). As in Brahms's song, the soft, sustained ♭VI conjures a vision of another tonal world. The subsequent ♭II simply takes listeners one step farther into that world, and only the final *pianissimo* V⁷-I gently but assuredly steers them back into the tonal world of the movement.

Example 13: Verdi, *Requiem*, "Kyrie," mm. 130-138

A similar but much more elaborate series of modulations characterizes the gorgeous final measures of Brahms's *Alto Rhapsody*. This passage is a perfect example with which to conclude this essay, for Brahms luxuriates at every step of the way down the flat side of the harmonic spectrum, with each stop warmer and more comforting than the last. The structural tonic C major) is established via an elaborate but conventional cadence nineteen measures from the end, as summarized in Example 14a. But in a stunning tonal shift, the bass C falls down a whole step to a cadential six-four chord in the key of ♭III (E♭ major). The phrase—a repetition of "erquicke sein Herz" (revive his heart)—leads up to a cadence on F major (IV in the original C major). But yet again Brahms cuts the phrase short only to drop down another whole step to a cadential six-four chord in the key of ♭VI (A♭ major with E♭ in the bass). Following the sequential pattern of the previous phrase, the music is steered back up to B♭ major, where a descending-fifth progression carries it to the climactic ♭II (D♭ major). Only at this point does Brahms calmly guide the bass from D♭ through C to a B♮, supporting a first-inversion V in the original key. This span of a diminished third, typical of the resolution of ♭II to V, also echos

in augmentation the heart-felt diminished-third motif that repeatedly accompanies the word "erquicke," as shown in Example 14b. Thus, this memorable melodic motif encapsulates the meaning of the deeper-level resolution from ♭II to V. The final tonic is revived and given new life after its rapturous harmonic descent flatward.

Example 14: Brahms, *Rhapsody* for alto voice, men's chorus, and orchestra, op. 53. Harmonic summary of the final 19 measures.

Stylistic Reflections

The expressive implications of the two examples of ♭II by Verdi and Brahms are quite different from those I cited from Mozart. Such varied uses of the same basic harmony support my original claim that deep-level harmonic motion, whether flatward or sharpward, does not convey a single specific meaning. Rather, such a broad category of harmonic events can be said only to embody a general impulse or energy that, in conjunction with tempo, rhythm, meter, melody, motive, texture, register, instrumentation, or accompanying text, may express an explicit idea.

These features of the musical surface, in fact, play a decisive role in lending meaning to harmonic motion. Without additional aspects of markedness, a given harmonic area—especially one so closely related to the tonic as the subdominant—is not, in and of itself, distinct. Bach and the Romantics

lend special significance to the subdominant by giving it pride of place at or near the concluding cadence. Yet, such a use of the subdominant to convey a spiritual dimension is virtually absent from works of the Classical style. The subdominant certainly plays an important formal role as a key area in certain rounded binary forms and sonata movements; the recapitulation of Mozart's Piano Sonata in C major, K. 545, which begins on the subdominant before reaching the tonic in the second key area, is just one example. And of course, composers typically pass through IV as a key area in Baroque fugues and inventions. In these cases, the subdominant serves a formal rather than an expressive function. The general emotional effect of the motion up a fifth—that of an increase in tension—remains, but in the absence of any marked surface features, this pronounced harmonic motion fails to conjure any special meaning.

The more striking flat harmonic regions, particularly ♭VI and ♭II, play only a limited expressive role in music of the late 18th century; they usually occur in minor-key works where they function within the diatonic collection and are therefore less marked. From an historical perspective, it is quite clear that such motion to the flat side of the harmonic spectrum is used sparingly by composers in the period of high Classicism, but is favored increasingly during the course of the 19th century.[29] Yet, the roots of this practice, particularly with its correlation to religious imagery, goes back to the Renaissance and is especially pronounced in the music of J. S. Bach.

To discover why this should be the case, one must reconsider Rosen's assertion of the imbalance between the dominant and the subdominant. The formal variety, clarity, and expressive range of late 18th-century music, about which Rosen writes so perceptively, is largely made possible by the tonic-dominant relationship. As the Classical style coalesced, the conventional role of the subdominant side of the harmonic spectrum, having long been of secondary importance, is even further reduced. One can scarcely find even a conventional plagal cadence in works of high Classicism, much less one that supercedes the structural V-I.

Having lived before the great flowering of the Classical style, J.S. Bach adopted many conventions and emulated several different styles without

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[29]In his article "Chromatic Feature of E♭-major Works of the Classical Period," *Music Theory Spectrum* 22/2 (2000): 177-204, Mark Anson-Cartwright identifies tonicizations of ♭VI in numerous works by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven (Appendices 1-3). Not surprisingly, this feature is found infrequently in works by Mozart and Haydn, but more often in Beethoven. Anson-Cartwright also identifies several more instances of ♭VI in works by later 19th-century composers (Appendix 7).

adhering to a single musical aesthetic. Thus free from the constraints of a dominating style, Bach felt at liberty to shape tonal conventions to suit his expressive desires. One must also recognize the profound impact that religious matters had on Bach not just as a professional church musician but, more importantly, as a true believer. The intelligence and creativity that he devoted to communicating his faith through music is probably unmatched in music history.

The use of music as an expression of personal belief is just one of the many legacies that Bach left for subsequent generations of composers. Those of the 19th century in particular took this attitude to heart. However, less likely to adhere to either religious or musical conventions, they found non-conventional ways to articulate their spiritual yearnings—in nature, in the epic past, in love, and in their own personal experience. The flat side of the harmonic spectrum offered to these composers, and to their tonal descendents in the early 20th century, an underexplored musical territory to express their subjective attitudes. In fact, the inherent resistance of such harmonic move-ment to specific meaning probably suited the Romantic composers' desire to voice the ineffability of spiritual transcendence.

Time and Divine Providence
in Mozart's Music

Nils Holger Petersen

Ferenc Fricsay and Mozart's Optimism

The following statement, which I will take as my point of departure for a discussion of Mozart's place in European spiritual history, has for decades been crucial to my understanding of his music. It is not an academic text, but was written by a musician, a most prolific performer of Mozart's music, the Hungarian conductor Ferenc Fricsay (1914-1963).[1] It is thus a statement of someone used to reading music in a most professional way. It is worth emphasizing the importance of the concept of "reading"—including its academic, interpretative ramifications— for the classical music tradition: when trying to highlight the concept of *playing* music or *listening* as musical alternatives to the supposedly intellectual process of *reading*, one must remember that at least one important reading will always have preceded any playing and listening, namely the reading which the performer must make

[1] Ferenc Fricsay became one of the leading conductors in West Berlin in the post-WWII years: he was head of the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra (originally the RIAS orchestra) and Generalmusikdirektor of the Deutsche Oper when it opened in 1960. He was a central figure of the Deutsche Grammophongesellschaft, which more recently has reissued quite a few of his recordings, among them the major Mozart operas (except for *Così fan tutte*, which Fricsay did not manage to record before his final illness and death) as well as the last three symphonies. Fricsay's Mozart performances were, at the time, highly innovative, in certain ways anticipating the so-called historical-performance style although completely without the ideology of "authenticity" often associated with this kind of practice. It is probably no coincidence that as much as for his Mozart interpretations, Fricsay was, and still is, recognized for his interpretations of some of the leading composers contemporary with his youth, notably Bela Bartók, Zoltan Kodaly, and Igor Stravinsky, and that he was responsible for the first Munich performance of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* (at the State Opera during his short time as Generalmusikdirektor there). There are entries on Fricsay in all major music dictionaries, and brief biographies and assessments of his legacy can be found in many of the recordings, such as the 10 volume set which Deutsche Grammophon released in 1994 at the occasion of what would have been Fricsay's 80th birthday. This set also includes his performance of Mozart's Requiem.

prior to performance, one which certainly determines much of what in the end the listener will listen to. Here, then, is Fricsay's statement:

> Mozart was the last great optimistic composer and, in the understanding of absolute music, the last classical composer. [...] With Beethoven again and again I sense tragic, even in his most cheerful works such as the last movement of the Ninth Symphony or the last scene of *Fidelio* or the final movement of the "Fifth"; there is always battle. Never does one detect a carefree smile, a truly comforted and comforting mood—invariably there is fear standing behind his music. [...]
> Mozart, by contrast, is the optimist *par excellence*. With him, even in his most doleful, most tragic works, such as the Symphony in G Minor, the terzet and quartet in *Idomeneo, Titus,* the initial movement of his Quintet in G Minor, one always senses and hears—even if from a very remote distance—a shimmer of gold, a certain feeling of bliss.[2]

Fricsay's account is, of course, not an analysis, but rather a glimpse, the verbalization of an interpreter who also in his rehearsals used words, along with highly specialized musical skills, to convey to an orchestra his readings of the music.

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[2]"Mozart war der letzte grosse optimistische Komponist und – im Sinne der absoluten Musik – der letzte klassische Komponist. [...] Ich fühle selbst in den glücklichsten Werken Beethovens, wie z.B. im letzten Satz der Neunten Symphonie oder in der letzten Szene des "Fidelio" oder im Schlusssatz der "Fünften", immer wieder Tragik, immer den Kampf. Nie ist ein sorgloses Lächeln zu spüren, eine richtig getröstete und tröstende Stimmung – es steht stets Angst hinter seiner Musik. [...] Mozart hingegen ist der Optimist par excellence. Bei ihm ist selbst in seinen traurigsten, tragischsten Werken, wie z.B. in der g-moll-Symphonie, im "Idomeneo"-Terzett und -Quartett, im "Titus", im ersten Teil von "Adagio und Fuge", im Stimsatz seines g-moll-Quintetts immer – wenn auch aus weitester Entfernung – ein Schimmer Gold fühlbar und hörbar, ein gewisses Glücksgefühl." F. Fricsay, *Über Mozart und Bartók* (Frankfurt a.M & Copenhagen: Wilhelm Hansen, 1962), pp. 18-19. Fricsay published this small, unpretentious book of essays on Mozart and Bartók the year before he died, at a period when his severe illness prevented him from conducting, when he thus tried to convey ideas through the "foreign language" of words instead of in his "native language" of music. This, in fact, is how he himself put it (p. 13), in words that recall Mozart's famous dictum in a letter (of November 1778) to his father. Mozart wrote that he could not express himself through words, not being a poet, not through painting nor dancing, but through tones—being as he was a musician. These are words which in their rhetorical eloquence are clearly of a rather ambiguous nature. See Wilhelm A. Bauer and Otto Erich Deutsch, eds., *Mozart – Briefe und Aufzeichnungen. Gesamtausgabe* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1962-), vol. II, pp. 110-111.

In his essay, Fricsay goes on to explain his use of the words "optimism" and "pessimism." The optimist is characterized as one whose basic outlook on life is trusting, who thinks of all tragic events or contradictions of the "good life" as crises to be lived through, but most importantly as something that does not fundamentally upset the order of the universe or the creation. Conversely, a pessimist in Fricsay's understanding is one who never really believes that things will end well, even when victory has just been won. For the pessimist, life is fundamentally a struggle, whereas for the optimist, his basic outlook on life remains constantly positive even though life around him may change and show different sides.[3]

In a more theologically informed language, this amounts to a statement about Mozart being the last composer whose music still manifests a faith in Divine Providence. In his reading of Mozart, Fricsay understands the content of the music as fundamentally identical with the form.[4] He makes it clear that he is not making a value judgment but instead is trying to characterize the music of Mozart and Beethoven in the way that they appear to him, as belonging to two radically different world views. We should bear in mind that Fricsay is not talking about authorial intentions, but about musical representations of inner attitudes.

Interestingly, my suggested theological reading seems largely to correspond with the way in which one of the most significant theologians of the 20th century, the Swiss Reformed Protestant, Karl Barth, understood Mozart. Barth regarded Mozart's music as a praise of the whole Creation, including what Barth terms its shadow side (thereby characterizing the limitations of life as we know it). Thus, in Barth's view, Mozart articulates a faith in God's Creation as something that is good not in spite of, but *in* its totality, which naturally encompasses both positive and negative aspects.[5]

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[3]Fricsay, *Über Mozart und Bartók*, pp. 19-20

[4]Fricsay, *Über Mozart und Bartók*, p. 25.

[5]Karl Barth, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik* vol. III, 3 (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag A.G. Zollikon, 1950), pp. 337-339. See also Jeremy S. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 95-96. I do not know whether any connection between Fricsay and Barth could be ascertained, yet the geographic proximity and contemporaneity of these statements makes some connection quite likely. It is more probable that Barth heard Fricsay perform than that Fricsay would have read Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik*. But then Fricsay could easily have heard or read Barth's address in the Music Hall at Basel on the occasion of Mozart's 200th anniversary (29 January 1956), later published as *Mozarts Freiheit* (Zurich: Zollikon, 1956).

Before I proceed from here, a few words of a methodological character are in order. One would be permitted to question what kind of authority a statement such as the one I have quoted from Fricsay's essay might have. In one sense, none whatsoever. As any personal statement, it belongs to the realm of Mozart reception but is not objectively verifiable in any way.[6] In another sense, as a reading deeply tied to a profound musician's performance experiences, it is inscribed in the interpretations of Mozart's compositions in the 20th century, including their electronic representations—and in that respect, it is possible to verify the reading. Studying scores and listening to sonic renderings of them are, in the end, the basic tools we have for interpreting music.

A historical precedent for theological interpretations of music was, as it is well known, established as early as the end of the fourth century by St. Augustine. To some extent in his *De musica*, but more influentially in some shorter passages of his psalm expositions concerning the so-called *iubilus* (a melismatic singing without words), he ascribed to music a place as a medium for its own particular kind of theological reflection. He also made reference to music in his *Confessions*, where he used it to exemplify his understanding of the concept of time. In book 11 of the *Confessions*, time is discussed in a theological perspective in relation to the Divine eternity out of which time as well as the world were created and to which all will in due course return. Here Augustine uses the singing of a melody as a tool for understanding the passing of time, its measurement, and the psychological aspect of time.[7]

As Augustine unfolds his description of the way the tones of a melody move from belonging to the Future through the briefness of the moment of the Present and into the Past, the melody becomes a metaphor for the life of a

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[6]Cf. V. Kofi Agawu, "Prospects for a Theory-based Analysis of the Instrumental Music," in Stanley Sadie, ed., *Wolfgang Amadè Mozart: Essays on his Life and his Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 121-131. Agawu takes issue with "soft" and "hard" Mozart analyses, proposing as the only way to get beyond so-called analytical formalism to adopt a theory-based hermeneutics (see esp. pp. 126-128).

[7]Aurelius Augustine, *De musica*, in J.-P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Latina* vol. xxxii, (Paris: Petit-Montrouge, 1845), col. 1081-1194. The Psalm Expositions are found in *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina XXXVIII-XL (Turnhout: Brepols, 1956). For the *Confessions* I refer to the Loeb editions with Latin and English texts: *St. Augustine's Confessions* I-II (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, and London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1970). Cf. also James McKinnon who, in *Church Fathers on Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), gives English translations of many key passages, as well as my own study, "Liturgy and Musical Composition," in *Studia Theologica* vol. 50 (1996), pp. 125-143, esp. pp. 128-131, and Eyolf Østrem's essay in this collection.

human being, and for all of humankind's history. His use of music as an exemplification of history and time seems to make it possible to think of musical forms as musical representations of (historical) time and thus to express in musical language the world view of a composer. I do not want to claim Augustine to be "right"; as Jeremy Begbie observes astutely in his critical discussion of the Augustinian understanding of time, the "aporias of time cannot be resolved." The point is rather to emphasize that Augustine's philosophy of time, beyond its immense past and ongoing authority in philosophico-theological discourses, is eminently applicable as a tool for reading music.[8]

Begbie's criticism—mainly concerning the usefulness of such a way of thinking for music in a contemporary view—seems to depend on the fact that musical experience "cannot be exhausted by those phenomena which can be said to exist 'now'."[9] But surely this is a point which is not only discussed but also solved elegantly by Augustine as he leads *ad absurdum* the notion of a "moment" in order to make the point that, when we measure time (and, we might add, when we experience time), this is done in our minds. He thus also explains the fact that we are able to retain the whole melody in our memory in spite of the fact that the parts already played no longer "exist."[10]

In the context of Mozart and the suggested theological reading of his music, Augustine thus provides a historical precedent, which can be read as pointing to the importance of musical form for such interpretations. This is what Fricsay's interpretation implied and what will be discussed further in the following sections.

The So-called Sonata Form and 18th-century Music

The musical form that is most often taken as paradigmatic for the development of instrumental music of the second half of the 18th century is, of course, the sonata form. However, the concept of sonata form presents

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[8]See Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, pp. 64-67.

[9]Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, p. 67.

[10]See book 11 of the *Confessions* (Loeb edition), pp. 208-285. I have discussed the relevant passages in my study, "Quem quaeritis in sepulcro? The Visit to the Sepulchre and Easter Processions in Piacenza 65," in Pierre Racine, ed., *Il Libro del Maestro. Codice 65 dell'Archivio Capitolare della Cattedrale di Piacenza (sec. XII)* (Piacenza: Tip.Le.Co., 1999), pp. 109-122.

problems as an analytical and interpretative tool since it was defined or
described many decades after what are usually considered to have been its
formative years, *viz.*, the early period of Haydn and Mozart. This means that,
in spite of the numerous and quite varied definitions offered throughout the
20th century, classifications never include all the works the theoreticians were
striving to include.[11] Even so, as an after-the-fact rationalization the concept
of sonata form has proved rather efficient and fruitful; the extent to which this
is true depends on the use one wants to make of it. In the context of the
questions raised in this essay, it will suffice to point to a very general aspect
of music-structural types that may not all be sonata forms in any of the strict
senses employed in scholarship.

   This aspect applies to all forms that can be brought under the umbrella
heading of sonata form (in whichever variant) as well as to a number of other
forms, especially overtures, but also including some vocal forms. In all I am
referring to a broad and rather complex field of musical forms that are linear
in a certain way as they "emphasize the horizontal dimension [... and] exploit
[...] the temporal scansion and the listener's memory," as Giorgio Pestelli[12]
formulates it concerning sonata form(s).[13] As we are all aware, the proto-
typical ternary sonata form features clearly defined musical motifs unfolding

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[11]Cf. Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (New York/ London:
W.W. Norton & Co, rev. ed. 1997), pp. 30-42 and 99-100, and Giorgio Pestelli, *The Age of
Mozart and Beethoven*, trans. Eric Cross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984),
pp. 14-18, 105-111. See especially pp. 275-278, where he quotes an important description
of musical form offered in 1796 by the Italian composer and theorist, Francesco Galeazzi
(1758-1819). This description comes very close to what was later understood as the typical,
ternary sonata form. A slightly extended excerpt from the Galeazzi text, including musical
examples, is found in Leo Treitler, ed., *Strunk's Source Readings in Music History* (New
York/London: W.W. Norton & Co, 1998), section 5, "The Late Eighteenth Century," pp.
820-826. For an even more extensive excerpt of Galeazzi, published together with parts of
another fundamental treatise from the later 18th century by Johann Georg Sulzer, cf. Nancy
Kovaleff Baker and Thomas Christensen, eds., *Aesthetics and the Art of Musical
Composition in the German Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
Finally, see the comments on sonata form in John Irving, "Revisiting Mozart's 'Haydn'
Quartets," *Studi Musicali* XXIX (2000): 185-214, esp. 188-192.

[12]Pestelli, *The Age of Mozart and Beethoven*, p. 16.

[13]See also Wye Jamison Allanbrook's introduction to the 5th section of the Treitler edition
of *Strunk's Source Readings*, pp. 737-746, particularly her discussion of Heinrich Christoph
Koch's treatise on composition from 1782-1793 (given in excerpts in the section) and of the
significance of classical rhetoric for the idea of composing. Allanbrook makes it clear how
the "emphasis" in the composition "is on process—construction—rather than structure, the
fluid over the frozen" (p. 739).

within a tonal structure that is based on a move away from the home key in the exposition, a process of modulation and variation in the development, a return of the opening theme in its original form and key in the third section, the recapitulation. Thereafter, the thematic material of the exposition is rephrased and tonally redirected to confirm rather than abandon the movement's original tonality.

Such dynamic and linear forms were in vogue during the last part of the 18th century. They are easily read in the context of the Augustinian thinking about history and time, which was and remains very influential for Christian theology as well as Western philosophy as a whole. In the context of an everyday experience of time, these thoughts may lead to the fundamental idea that music forms mental images of temporal segments. These forms may be compared schematically to a prototypical model of the contemporary *Bildungsroman*.[14] In that model, a journey starts out from what may metaphorically be taken as a "home" with well-defined structures, motifs etc. Through some process—which may entail the problematization of these motifs and of the well-ordered structures from the beginning of the work—the music finally arrives "back home," maybe with a changed perspective, but in any case returned to the same fundamental structures and the same orderliness. Such forms thus seem to encourage interpretations that are related to the ideas of Creation and Providence, in such a way that they may even be understood as offering musical narratives as a kind of comment or even answer to questions concerning the course of time and indicating subjective feelings that might arise in particular instances or situations.[15]

The dynamically linear model is characteristic in a statistically verifiable sense for the contributions of instrumental music to the musical forms created in the second half of the 18th century. These forms seem to favor an idea of

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[14]See M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1971), esp. pp. 32-37, 154-195, and 225-252.

[15]In his 1806 *Cours complet d'harmonie et de composition*, the Belgian organist and theorist Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny undertook to analyze the first movement of Mozart's Quartet in D minor, K. 421 by providing it with a—for him—appropriately noble and pathetic text, so to say making a verbal narration that would fit or correspond to the musical narration. In the light of the understanding of musical forms outlined above, this otherwise strange idea may be viewed differently (whatever one might think of his choice of the tragic Dido narrative as his point of departure). See Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, pp. 826-848, cf. also the comment in John Irving, *Mozart: The "Haydn" Quartets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 75-76.

balance.[16] They are roughly symmetric regarding central aspects, without therefore exhibiting any (necessary or intended) rigidity, at the same time as being dynamic in the ways they use harmonic progressions to mark the decisive divisions of the musical action through a harmonically defined structure that is not narrowly delimited.

I believe these types of musical forms to be particularly well-suited to the interpretations of Fricsay concerning Divine Providence. In order to substantiate this, I will explore a question that lies at the basis of my own reading of Mozart: is it true that the way in which Mozart uses the classical ternary form preserves a balance even in the most radical and tragic contexts, whereas the same balance seems changed and much less secure in Beethoven's works?[17] I will attempt to unfold this idea, which is fundamental for my reading of Mozart, through the dual example of the two string quartets in D minor. I will point to specific devices that I consider characteristic of Mozart's compositional technique, devices that enable him to establish sharp contrasts seemingly expressive of sadness or even despair, but which never jeopardize the balance of form and what Fricsay saw as the optimistic basis. However, before I can address the compositions themselves and embark on a reading of their potential religious dimensions, a few questions must be raised regarding methodological precautions as well as the biographical context of the two works.

Hermeneutic and Historiographic Considerations

Since my reading of Mozart's music consists in verbalizing a theological subtext that is dependent on my understanding of basic compositional structures—structures that would probably not have been perceived in this light during Mozart's own time—this reading will by necessity be anachronistic at least in principle. On the one hand, any reading of historical

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[16]Pestelli writes about greater stability and regularity (*The Age of Mozart and Beethoven*, p. 16). The importance of the design or layout ("Anlage" in the original German texts) is borne out clearly in Johann Georg Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* (1771-1774). See the translations of sections of this work in Baker and Christensen, esp. pp. 66-67, as well as the references to this passage in Heinrich Christoph Koch's above-mentioned treatise, pp. 160-161.

[17]I refer also to the comparison between Mozart's and Beethoven's C-minor piano concertos in my study, *Kristendom i musikken* (Copenhagen: Schønberg, 1987), chapter 4 (pp. 101-128).

documents is, of course, anachronistic to some extent, since it must take its point of departure from the context and the questions relevant to the modern scholar. And while a reading during Mozart's life time would certainly be of great interest,[18] any modern recipient in order to appropriate it would have to filter it through his or her modern quest. On the other hand, even though questions and approaches must be modern—and hence new readings must be made again and again—the sources and their historical context must act as some kind of control, resisting any interpretation that does not take the historical material seriously. The important question is thus in what measure the structures and possible layers of meaning assumed in my modern theological perspective can be convincingly argued to exist in the historical material, regardless of whether they were or could have been seen in such a light at the time. Paul Ricœur and Hans Georg Gadamer, among others, have maintained that the reception of a work and its later readings (or what Ricœur has termed the "foreground" of a text for the modern reader or listener) have become inextricably connected with what traditionally was thought of as "the work itself," so that this foreground can no longer be left out of an informed reading.[19] This, however, must not be taken as a licence to read anything into a text. A foreground, as the term indicates, is from the very outset tied to a text.

Leo Treitler recently drew attention to the very basic but often forgotten origin of hermeneutics: "hermeneutic practice is a response to a need. It is a struggle against misunderstanding, or against the inability to understand the behaviors or texts of others."[20] This means that interpretations never take place in a vacuum, but relate to the historical images we have conceptualized, and allow at best that we try to add new shades to them or even to correct previously held assumptions.

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[18]We do possess at least fragmentary "readings," or rather, reactions to Mozart's works. Those to the "Haydn" quartets range from Haydn's famous appraisal, made orally to Leopold Mozart, to utterances to the effect that the music was too complicated; see Irving, *Mozart: The "Haydn" Quartets*, pp. 13-14 and 74-75.

[19]For a recent discussion of textual foregrounds, see Paul Ricœur and André LaCocque, *Biblical Thinking* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1998), where Biblical texts are discussed in such a perspective, see esp. Preface, pp. ix-xix.

[20]Leo Treitler, "Hermeneutics, exegetics, or what?," keynote lecture given at the 13th Nordic Musicology Conference in Aarhus, August 2000. So far the paper has only been published on the internet, on the web page of a musicological conference: http://www.hum.au.dk/musik/nmk2000.

With this I would like to clarify to what need my interpretation tries to respond and against what potential misunderstandings I am "struggling." I am, obviously, dealing with modern concerns here. To answer very briefly at first, the need has to do with historiography and regards the traditional division of music history into periods. The hermeneutic quest thus leads back to the historical presuppositions which will always form part of the background to a particular interpretation.

When constructing the history of the arts and the artists of Western culture, and considering the relationship between this area and the religious history of this culture, we often end up with a scheme of secularization. In the present context I use the concepts of the arts and of the artist in the broadest possible sense to include even periods, functions, and persons far removed from, for instance, any modern notion of the artist. This means that the concept of the artist is taken to include the monk in his monastery—for instance in Carolingian or even earlier times—who constructs, reshapes, or simply repeats musical traditions handed down to him and his community through centuries. He would typically have no concept of himself as a creator, but rather see himself as a preserver of a Divine or at least authoritative tradition. Conversely, the composer or poet of the early 19th century thought of himself as a creator. Differently from both, the composer of around 2000 seems at the same time completely alienated from the traditional role as a competent craftsman in the service of the Church or a Prince , and skeptical concerning the Romantic construction of an artist as "Divine creator."The contemporary composer would be more likely to construe him or herself as a "critical instance," as a joker or an independent unruly commentator questioning the very concept of art he or she constantly referred back to.

The idea of secularization is, of course, not necessarily wrong; indeed, there is much to be said for it. It does, however, seem to lead to an oversimplified understanding of the music (and the other arts) of the second half of the 18th century. This period—with the creation of the *beaux arts*, the "artistic," as it were, in its "own right"—is crucial for the transition from music (or art) in a religious or politico-religious context to individually created works expressive of the artist's personal feelings. This is epitomized by such figures as Lully, Purcell, J.S. Bach, and others. Whereas Lully is construed as a composer glorifying the court of Louis XIV, Purcell as writing his music mainly in the context of the English court, and J.S. Bach as creating in praise of God, the music from the end of the 18th century is often thought of as basically independent of its religious or courtly functions.

For Mozart, scholars have attempted to construct a similar picture, relying on details of his biography, especially his break with the Prince Archbishop of Salzburg, which led to his establishing himself as an independent composer in Vienna in the 1780s. Wolfgang Hildesheimer's study of Mozart, written in 1977, carried this image to the extreme; from here it also entered the larger literary world through Peter Shaffer's important play, *Amadeus,* and Milos Forman's celebrated film based on this play.[21] Such an overly simplified picture of Mozart has never been accepted by serious scholars. Nevertheless, aspects of this image are manifest in, for instance, Daniel Heartz's one-sided reading of *Idomeneo* as an enlightenment opera informed by the Voltaire-influenced positions of Friedrich Melchior von Grimm, the German literary figure in Paris on whose support the Mozarts depended in the 1770s. A brief look at this reading will serve to clarify the historiographic point I am making in this essay.[22]

In an important scene in this opera, the High Priest of Neptune in a *recitativo accompagnato* convinces Idomeneo, the King of Crete, to confess that he is protecting his own son, Idamantes, from being sacrificed to Neptune. The High Priest achieves this by pointing to the disasters happening around them: a terrifying beast is killing people, the streets are flooded with blood. The orchestral accompaniment with its trills is interpreted by Heartz as a negative comment on the figure of the High Priest. This interpretation is based on attitudes known from the Voltaire circle. The importance of the sacrifice drama for the enlightenment of the later 18th century seems to have been that through such dramas an audience could experience the cruelty of religious vows, and thus be led emotionally to support the new humanistic and tolerant ideals. Heartz points to statements found in von Grimm's journal, "Correspondance littéraire," that support this ideology and suggests that the

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[21]Wolfgang Hildesheimer, *Mozart* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1977). For a recent, very balanced view on Mozart and Catholicism, including discussions of his Masonic activities, see Nicholas Till, *Mozart and the Enlightenment* (London: Faber, 1992), pp. 117-129. Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* (London: André Deutsch, 1980) also draws on Pushkin's play *Mozart and Salieri* (see Alexander Pushkin, *Selected Works in Two Volumes,* I: Poetry, trans. Avril Pyman (Moscow: Raduga Publishers, 1974), pp. 111-121. Shaffer's literary work should not, of course, be judged by historical criteria, being fictional in purpose.

[22]Concerning Heartz's interpretation of *Idomeneo* and the influence of von Grimm, see his chapter "Sacrifice Dramas" in Daniel Heartz, *Mozart's Operas* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1990), pp. 1-13.

same thinking lies behind Mozart's choice (if it was indeed his own) to set the Idomeneo narrative to music for his Munich opera commission in 1780.[23]

Yet the interpretation of the scene, and of Mozart's attitude to the sacrifice drama as a whole, is much less obvious than Heartz would have us believe. It is true that Mozart evokes a compassion with Idamantes, and clearly the vow and the sacrifice are seen as cruel. But the High Priest is described as someone who acts out of compassion with the people and in complete solidarity with Idamantes. Stating the innocence of the son, he even prays that Idamantes may be freed from the terrifying fate awaiting him, and thus expresses Christian ideas of clemency. Musically, too, there is reason to believe that Mozart conceived this scene with an image of the High Priest, which has many shades. The orchestral figures in the recitativo accompagnato mentioned above closely resemble those that Mozart would use years later to accompany Tamino when approaching the temples in the kingdom of Sarastro; the *Zauberflöte* figures include the very trills to which Heartz attaches such a negative interpretation.[24]

Several statements in Mozart's letters give good reason to challenge a one-dimensional Voltarian reading of the scene. Thus even without attempting to pin down Mozart's personal religious stance, one might want to argue for an historically possible understanding of his music which is not tied to the concept of secularization.

Mozart's personal beliefs or attitudes are, as Andrew Steptoes has noted, difficult to assess.[25] However, as Nicholas Till has demonstrated, the importance of his membership in a Masonic lodge should probably not be construed as a stance in opposition to a general Catholic commitment, as he seems to have belonged to a Catholic group among the Freemasons in Vienna.[26] Trying to see through the surface, many scholars have turned to Mozart's extensive correspondence. Admittedly, the letters to his father may clearly have had a number of different subtexts that ought to be taken into account. Yet they contain remarks that should be of at least contextual interest to the questions asked, and while these certainly do not claim to prove the

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[23]See Heartz, *Mozart's Operas*, p. 9. Cf. also Till, *Mozart and the Enlightenment*, pp. 60-82.

[24]See the piano score of the New Mozart Edition: W.A. Mozart, *Idomeneo*, K. 366, edited by Heinz Moehn (Kassel: Bärenreiter, n.d.), act III, scene VI, pp. 406-411 and 419-420.

[25]Andrew Steptoe, "Mozart's Personality and Creativity" in Sadie, ed., *Wolfgang Amadè Mozart: Essays on his Life and his Music*, pp. 21-34, esp. p. 33, n. 42.

[26]Till, *Mozart and the Enlightenment*, pp. 124-125.

validity of the musical interpretations given below, they may, indirectly as it were, lend some support to the likelihood of the proposed reading.

The letter Mozart wrote to his father on the day his mother died in Paris (3 July 1778) throws important light on Mozart's attitudes. As it is well known, he did not immediately reveal to his father and sister that his mother was already dead, but only described her illness in such a way as to pave the way for the message he would then convey a few days later (9 July 1778). Simultaneously, he wrote to Abbot Bullinger in Salzburg, telling him the truth and asking him to help prepare his father for the sad news. Andrew Steptoes regards this as a witness to Mozart's sensitivity.[27]

Interestingly, in the context of the report of his mother's illness, Wolfgang asserts his belief in Divine Providence. While the following statement may be viewed as a stock phrase, merely expressive of conventionality in the face of the grave situation, the question is whether conventionality precludes honesty: "Let us hope, but not too much; let us trust in God, and console ourselves with the thought that all will be well if it goes according to the will of the Almighty, insofar as He knows best what for all of us is most enjoyable and useful for both our temporal and our eternal happiness and salvation."[28] Mozart's way of reporting another death may shed light on the genuineness of the hopes expressed. For, following this passage, he proceeds to tell about the rehearsals and the concert performance of his so-called *Paris Symphony* (K. 297). Between other short remarks he suddenly inserts strangely abusive words: "Now I give you a piece of news of which you may already know, namely, that the godless arch-rascal Voltaire has died—like a beast, as it were. So that is what he got out of it." As if this were nothing, he then immediately continues with domestic affairs. This harsh judgement, the editors of the Mozart letters remark,[29] would seem to be owing to Voltaire's critical attitude to the Catholic Church. Leopold Mozart's contact in Paris, the above-

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[27]Steptoes, "Mozart's Personality and Creativity," p. 25.

[28]"[...] hoffen wir, aber nicht zu viell; haben wir unser vertrauen auf gott, und trösten wir uns mit diesem gedancken, dass alles gut gehet, wenn es nach den willen des allmächtigen geht, indemm er an besten weis was uns allen sowohl zu unserm zeitlichen als Ewigen glück und heyl erspriesslich und nutzbar ist - ." Bauer and Deutsch, eds., *Mozart − Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, II, pp. 387-390 [p. 388].

[29]"Nun gebe ich ihnen eine nachricht die sie vielleicht schon wissen werden, dass nehmlich der gottlose und Erz-spizbub voltaire so zu sagen wie ein hund - wie ein vieh crepirt ist - das ist der lohn! ...," Bauer and Deutsch, eds., *Mozart − Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* II, p. 389. The editorial remarks are found in volume V, p. 532.

mentioned Melchior von Grimm, belonged to the encyclopedist circle around Voltaire. Mozart moved into Grimm's house after his mother's death. It seems clear from letters that Wolfgang definitely did not like him, and that it was Leopold who wanted Wolfgang to be under his influence.[30]

It does not, therefore, seem justified to write off Wolfgang's remarks about Voltaire as being said to please his father, just as the abrupt way in which the remark occurs in the letter does not point to a planned rhetorical construction. It seems more likely to me that the remark about Voltaire reflects attitudes that the young Mozart had at the time. If this is correct, it corroborates the suggestion that the conventional theology of Providence stated during the account of his mother's illness was something he genuinely embraced—at least at that moment. There are other statements to the same effect in letters from the late 1770s, and it does not seem justified to discard them completely.[31]

Another interesting hint can also be found in the corpus of preserved letters written by Wolfgang and Leopold Mozart; it emerges while both were in Vienna during the months of July, August, and September 1773, the period during which time the first of the works to be discussed below, the quartet in D minor K. 173, seems to have been composed. At this very time, the papal bull of 21 July 1773 declared the Jesuit order dissolved. Leopold, writing to his wife at home in Salzburg, refers to this event—in a rather matter-of-fact tone though apparently with some measure of sympathy for the Jesuits—not only once, but repeatedly during the weeks following the implementation. These church-historical circumstances did not affect the Mozarts very directly, but clearly had their impact on Leopold.[32] Wolfgang, in other words, grew up in an environment where the Church and the traditional Catholic religion were taken seriously. At the same time, this allegiance did not prevent Leopold from seeking support for Wolfgang from Parisian circles of a rather different observance. What all this meant for Wolfgang's personal relationship to the Church or to religion is not easy to know, but in all his letters,

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[30]See Bauer and Deutsch, eds., *Mozart – Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* II, pp. 472-478 [474 ff] and 425-426 (letters from Wolfgang to Leopold of 11 September and 31 July 1778), pp. 430, 444-445, and 465-467 (letters from Leopold to Wolfgang of 31 July, 13 August, and 3 September 1778).

[31]See, e.g., Bauer and Deutsch, eds., *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, II), pp. 437-441 (letter from Wolfgang to Abbé Bullinger 7 August 1778).

[32]Bauer und Deutsch, eds., 1962 (vol. I), pp. 494, 498-499 (letters from Leopold to his wife 4, 8, and 11 September 1773).

Wolfgang does not seem to have expressed any negative or critical remarks about religion as such.

In the end, the interest in understanding Mozart's relationship to religion should, in this context, be seen as part of a larger historiographic quest concerning his place in music history. A sweeping view may take its point of departure in those compositional features of Western music which, through a long and complicated process, gradually emerged from a musical culture characterized as oral (or, as especially Leo Treitler has articulated it, based on transmittance through musical performance rather than writing). What had already been inherent in the thoughts of St. Augustine almost five hundred years earlier when, as mentioned above, he constructed historical time as linear, seems gradually to have been reflected and made manifest in music in an epoch when music began to be notated, in the later Carolingian period. In the singing of a melody, the whole of a human being's life and through this the whole of humankind's life could be imagined. In the idea of musical notation—the visually recorded substratum of the sounding matter—an understanding of music as an image of time becomes manifest in tangible form. Music is no longer restricted to an ephemeral presence in the process or performing and listening, but becomes visually, physically present at any time and all at once.[33] The history of music has often been described as the history of the forms manifested in musical compositions. In a cursory overview, this history can be traced onwards until a fundamental breakdown occurs, or maybe rather, until a fundamental questioning of such constructions of musical form emerge, in modernistic and post-modernistic music. The seeming collapse of extended musical forms as a main tool for musical composition in the early 20th century coincides with the period when religion and value systems traditionally associated with Christianity in Europe likewise crumbled. This collapse that then led to the present cultural situation, one not necessarily without religious interests or quests, but clearly not governed by normative sets of religious beliefs either.[34]

[33]I have discussed this in detail in my forthcoming paper (presented at the Conference on Carolingian Music held in Paderborn, October 1999), "Theology in Carolingian Music or Theology and Carolingian Music," to be published in the proceedings of the conference, edited by Hartmut Möller and Annegrit Laubenthal.

[34]This is reflected in, e.g., Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag Ullstein, 1974). For an interesting way of combining fictional and historical account, see also Thomas Mann's 1947 novel, *Doktor Faustus. Das Leben des deutschen Tonsetzers Adrian Leverkühn, erzählt von einem Freunde* (Berlin: Fischer Verlag, 1963), which may be read as a personal yet highly informed subjective witness to this process.

My struggle, as it were, regards the historiographic position of Mozart in such a narrative; and the reading I propose, inspired by Ferenc Fricsay's interpretation, is a reading that places Mozart firmly in what has been called Old Europe. This is the traditional, Christian Europe, medieval in the extended sense of, for instance, Jacques LeGoff. It is Europe at the same time when the individualism with which many thinkers of the Enlightenment were concerned is being pronounced more convincingly than ever before.[35]

Mozart's D-minor Quartets as Expressions of His World View

Mozart scholars date the six last of his early quartets to the late summer or early fall of 1773, a time he spent with his father in Vienna. The last of these quartets, K. 173 in D minor, will be the focus of my interest, together with its much more famous counterpart, K. 421, also in D minor, which is the second of the famous set of six string quartets that Mozart published in 1785 with a dedication to Joseph Haydn. The two chosen works are the only quartets in a minor mode within Mozart's large output in this genre, and it is part of my argument that both works may be read meaningfully in the context of what D minor denotes in Mozart's oeuvre. The composer often chose this key for vocal works of a particularly radical nature, most particularly for issues dealing, positively or negatively, with religious judgement and revenge—as prayer in the face of judgement or as a pronouncement of such a judgement or revenge. This is most obvious in the case of the *Requiem* and in *Don Giovanni*. It can also be observed in the *Kyrie in D minor* K. 341 as well as in particular segments of larger works; see, e.g., in the second act of *Idomeneo*, the raging storm (the retaliation of Neptune because Idomeneo refuses to carry out his vow of killing his son Idamantes) and in *Die Zauberflöte*, the second aria of the Queen of Night (another act of Divine revenge).

It is not, however, my point to read the two string quartets—or other compositions in D minor—primarily as exceptions. On the contrary, I will argue that they may be understood as especially prominent manifestations of the general spiritual mode of Mozart's music and that, when brought together,

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[35]Concerning the periodization of European History, see Dietrich Gerhard, *Old Europe. A Study of Continuity 1000-1800* (New York: Academic Press, 1981), pp. 80-88, and Jacques LeGoff, *The Imagination of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 7-11. Both opt for an idea of an extended Middle Ages that includes the 18th century as well as showing an awareness of the tentative and problematic aspects of any periodization.

they may be read as expressive, in a particularly exemplary way, of certain tendencies prevalent at his time and in his society.

The argument in this essay is based on readings of Mozart's works in general. The following descriptions of the two string quartets in D minor may serve as examples of such readings. As it will become apparent, almost any example taken from Mozart's instrumental music could be used in a similar manner. As examples of a larger group of works striking in their emotional charge, the D-minor quartets are particularly suited since they bear out the double-sidedness of the proposed reading.[36]

The string quartet K. 173 opens with an *Allegro* that, since it seems difficult to apply the traditional sonata-form schemes to this movement, may be described as conceived in a linear form of the type discussed above. This is followed by an *Andantino grazioso* in D major—the only entire movement to sound in a major key—in which the theme recurs constantly as a *ritornello*. The third movement, a *Menuetto*, returns to D minor. It has the tense quality often met with later in Mozart's œuvre, particularly in the great minor-key works (see, e.g., the Symphony in G minor, K. 550). Its trio, in F major, seems to harken back to the second movement in its use of triplets. The fourth movement, again in D minor, is a fugue, no doubt inspired by Joseph Haydn's quartets op. 20. Its subject builds on semitone steps descending through a fifth, the lament figure that, at least since the early 17th century, had a

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[36]In the following I rely on the Neue Mozart Ausgabe of the quartets under consideration. For the earlier of the two works, see Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Quartett in d für zwei Violinen, Viola und Violoncello, K. 173* in Karl Heinz Füssl, Wolfgang Plath und Wolfgang Rehm, eds. *Neue Mozart Ausgabe, Serie VIII, Kammermusik, Werkgruppe 20, Abteilung 1, Band 1*, BA 4546 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1966), pp. 175-192, and pp. 198-201 (the latter giving a probably first version of the finale), and with an introduction to the early quartets in the volume, pp. vii-xiv. For the later work see Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Quartett in d für zwei Violinen, Viola und Violoncello, K. 421* in Ludwig Finscher, ed., *Neue Mozart Ausgabe, Serie VIII, Kammermusik, Werkgruppe 20, Abteilung 1, Band 2*, BA 4530 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1962), pp. 33-56, also with an introduction to the set of the so-called "Haydn" quartets, pp. vii-xii.

Not surprisingly, the scholarly literature on the later quartets is far more prominent than that concerning the early quartets. Concerning the "Haydn" quartet, I refer mainly to the previously mentioned study by John Irving, *Mozart: The "Haydn" Quartets*, which also offers a brief account of the early string quartets; further to Irving, "Revisiting Mozart's 'Haydn' Quartets," and Wye J. Allanbrook, " 'To Serve the Private Pleasure': Expression and Form in the String Quartets," in Sadie, ed., *Wolfgang Amadè Mozart: Essays on his Life and his Music*, pp. 132-177. Concerning the early quartet, I refer to Daniel Heartz, *Haydn, Mozart and the Viennese School 1740-1780* (New York, London: W.W. Norton, 1995), esp. pp. 564-567.

prominent role in musical composition. Mozart was to use it a number of times at crucial points in his music, notably in a number of Mass compositions, notably for the *Crucifixus* text of the *Credo*. The same figure can also be found—intertwined in innumerable ways into the texture—in the score of *Don Giovanni*: at the death of the Commendatore, at the oath of revenge taken by Anna and Ottavio, in the setting of Commendatore's lines in the churchyard scene, and (hardly surprising) at the judgment scene, but also in the so-called champagne aria and on many other occasions.[37]

In terms of its thematic material, already the first movement provides brief passages of descending chromaticism[38] which, especially in combination with the many other chromatic passages in this movement, may be seen as an anticipation of the finale.[39]

The final movement is one to which scholarly commentators have reacted negatively. Daniel Heartz describes it as "learned and plodding," particularly in comparison with the "delightful" fugal finale of Haydn's Quartet in C Major from op. 20. John Irving chastises the movement's "artificiality," criticizing Mozart's display of contrapuntal skill as a kind of "sales brochure" more than a "unified artistic statement."[40] I find it difficult to sustain such readings in view of the consistency and strictness of the compositional procedure. Furthermore, it seems problematic, to say the least, to claim that

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[37]See, for instance, the famous use of the lament in Carissimi's oratorio from the mid-17th century, *Jephta,* reflected upon as an example of a rhetorical figure in a 17th-century treatise, Athanasius Kircher's *Musurgia Universalis.* See Graham Dixon, *Carissimi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 4-14 and 72. Concerning Mozart's deployment of descending chromaticism in Crucifixus movements, see Daniel Heartz, *Haydn, Mozart and the Viennese School 1740-1780,* pp. 530 (concerning the K. 49 Mass from 1768), 658, and 667 (concerning two later Salzburg Masses from 1775-1779, the latter of them the famous Coronation Mass, K. 317). In *Don Giovanni,* the lament figure is pervasively used; extensive analytical comments appear in Stefan Kunze, *Mozarts Opern* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1984), pp. 319-431 (esp. p. 377). See also the chapter, "Donna Elvira and the Great Sextet," in Daniel Heartz, *Mozart's Operas,* pp. 206-215 (esp. p. 210).

[38]See, in the first violin, mm. 18-20, 88-90, and 115-117; in the second violin, mm. 37-39, 60-63, and 107-109; in the viola, mm. 18-20, 38-40, 60-64, 88-90, and 108-110. The cello alone never engages in any consistent lamenting.

[39]Cf., however, Irving, "Revisiting Mozart's 'Haydn' Quartets," pp. 187-188. Irving claims even concerning the later "Haydn" quartets that for Mozart the idea of binding together movements in a quartet (or any sonata type work) cannot be assumed (at least not on theoretically documentable grounds).

[40]Cf. Heartz, *Haydn, Mozart and the Viennese School 1740-1780,* p. 567, and Irving, *Mozart: The "Haydn" Quartets,* p. 9.

one can distinguish between the artistic statements and Mozart's alleged wish to impress or please possible future patrons. I see no reason to doubt the sincerity of Mozart's work, especially when comparing the K. 173 with the later D-minor work from 1785.

Unusually for him, Mozart also composed a slightly shorter (probably earlier) version of the finale, in everything except the length very similar. The autograph of this version— which is the only preserved autograph of the K. 173—is now held at the British Library, which recently acquired it together with other original sketches from the Stephan Zweig collection. The autograph is impressive in its seemingly hasty writing, somewhat untidy in its indications of dynamical signs, but otherwise with but one correction in the whole movement.[41]

Whether or not it is permissible to think of the quartet as a whole,[42] the themes of the first, third, and fourth movements are related in the sense that they all open with descending scales; see the diatonic scalar motions in D-minor in the first movement (from A to D) and in the *Menuetto* (from A to C♯), and the descending chromatic scale in the finale (from D to G, and even further in diatonic steps through E to D). The *Andantino grazioso* is a rondo in D major organized along a scheme that could be represented as A B A C A C1 A C2 A B C3. Its main theme moves into a descending scale in triplet rhythm before it concludes with a cadence. This figure is then made into the basis for episode B; at the same time, the very consistent use of triplets also ties it to section C and its variations. The calm and consistency of the writing in an unproblematized major mode in conjunction with the fluidity of the triplets points forward to the trio within the third movement. As a result, the *Andantino* and its counterpart in the trio become the resting points of the quartet. These movements appear innocent and almost naive, and in stark contrast to the three D-minor movements in which the music consistently, almost stubbornly, keeps to the strictness of thematic writing and seems to express tense, unresolved pain.

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[41]British Library, Zweig MS. 52. In the summer of 2000, I had occasion to study this Mozart autograph. I thank Nicolas Bell curator at the British Library, for drawing my attention to the Zweig collection and for his generous help during my visit to the library. See also Arthur Searle, *The British Library Stefan Zweig Collection. Catalogue of the Music Manuscripts* (London: The British Library, 1999), pp. 69-70. Concerning the lost autographs of the K. 173 (except for a facsimile of the front page), see the NMA edition (cf. above n. 36), introduction, pp. xi and xiii.

[42]Allanbrook, " 'To Serve the Private Pleasure'," p. 151

Even so, the unfolding of the first movement with its variety of dynamic shades and rhythmical patterns (among them the syncopated accompaniment to the ascending triad of the first violin in mm. 10 ff) seems to be broken up by sharp and unprepared changes, as found between the soft opening theme in mm. 1-9 and the motif in mm. 10-16.

An even more radically opposed constellation within a very simple overall structure is that between the D-minor *Menuetto* and its F-major *Trio*. Such unprepared oppositions with no consequences in terms of musical form seem to be fundamentally characteristic of Mozart's instrumental music, and have led V. Kofi Agawu to suggest as a project for Mozart scholarship to investigate how the "ongoing discourse of a Mozart instrumental work is marked by a normative causality within musical periods that complements but finally contradicts the casual causality between successive periods."[43] This is certainly corroborated by an analysis of the "Haydn" quartets.

The Quartet in D minor, K. 421, opens with a movement that shows this same feature to a high degree. This has been laid out convincingly by John Irving, who notes that, after the soft and calm opening theme, supported by a chaconne bass, "a succession of short and distinctive figures simply *evolves.*" Irving—quoting Arnold Schoenberg, who ascribed to this passage a "prose-like" character—sees the development section as an example of how Mozart builds form by contrast.[44] Commenting on the *Andante* (a calm Siciliano in F major), Irving draws attention to the rhythmic connections between what he describes as "disparate elements of radically different emotional character," and claims this procedure to be a "significant factor in the Andante's continuity."[45] A further typical example of such contrasts (which, as Irving argues, do not upset the formal balance) is also found in the second movement. An A♭-major episode (mm. 35-42) is followed by a transition from F minor via C major to F major (mm. 42-52), leading into the F-major recapitulation of the movement's opening section. The transition, however, consists in the juxtaposition of short episodes which seem to have very little to do with each other in terms of mood or character, but are tied together exclusively by way of rhythmic unity.

The tense *Menuetto* is very much a refined parallel to the *Menuetto* of K. 173. It is similarly marked by a descending lament figure, which can be traced

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[43]Cf. Agawu, "Prospects for a Theory-based Analysis of the Instrumental Music," p. 130.

[44]Irving, *Mozart: The "Haydn" Quartets,* pp. 33-34.

[45]Irving, "Revisiting Mozart's 'Haydn' Quartets," p. 195.

from the violoncello (see mm. 1-8) to the first violin (mm. 14-19 and 21-26) and the second violin (mm. 21-26). The *Trio* then presents a completely contrasting mood, with D major as a key and ascending triads in the first violin as prominent melodic features. The finale, a variation movement based on a restless Siciliano in D minor with a penetrating and stunning tone repetition as the end point of the theme (see mm. 2-5, 7-9, etc.), is in the last *Più allegro* variation rhythmically intensified with triplets (mm. 113-142).

Having traced the principal features of the two quartets chosen as exemplary cases, one could make the following observation. On the one hand, the music in its basic (sonata) form conforms with the structural outline of the kind described above as linear in its progression (modeled after the *Bildungsroman*). On the other hand, there emerges a seemingly contrasting way of formal construction, based on episodes that are built along ways that do not seem to evolve logically or in terms of the idea of gradual formation and maturation. The result is a musical form that
constitutes an image of a segment of time (history, life, etc.) as in the Augustinian thinking, but which also incorporates the lack of any necessity on Mozart's side to control or overview this history. Rather, the composer registers various emotions, looks at them very closely, but then passes on to other emotions, which he renders just as deeply. The spiritual backdrop to this procedure is, in my understanding, that Mozart—unlike Beethoven—does not see a need to guarantee the consistency or meaningfulness of life.

Conclusion

Mozart's two string quartets in D minor, written with a twelve-year interval between them, may be read as musical expressions of a fundamental belief in Providence. The two works belong to the unrelentingly dark aspects of Mozart's production, like the two G-minor symphonies, the D and C minor piano concertos and the G minor string quintet. As in the most consistently "dark" of these, there seems to be no consolation at the end of either of the two D-minor quartets. The tradition of concluding even a minor-mode composition in the major key is only observed by means of the Picardy-third in the final cadences. As Wye Allanbrook claims concerning K. 421, this kind of cadential closure demonstrates an ecclesiastical association; I might even suggest that it can be heard as creating a ceremonial distance instead of the expected consolation. Even the short variation in the major key in K. 421 (mm. 97-112) does not seriously affect the overall mood of the movement. In

accordance with the construction of the music on the basis of building-blocks that are not necessarily emotionally related, the brief excursion to the major mode in fact confirms rather than contradicts what has already been pointed out: even in music with such an overwhelmingly sad atmosphere, light and dark passages may stand next to each other with seemingly no need whatsoever on Mozart's part for a justification of these changes. They simply occur.

It does seem possible to read this in the light of Fricsay's assessment of Mozart and his particular spiritual optimism. Life changes around the composer, but his general attitude remains constant, as is manifested in the balanced form. The balance of the form is not threatened by the diversity of emotions. In other words, it is not up to the composer—as it would appear in the case of much of Beethoven's music—to save the world. For Beethoven, the struggle is greatly emphasized, especially in his middle period, in the almost too obvious example of the Fifth Symphony, but also in the Ninth. The finale of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony would not seem possible without the complex transition from the funeral-like march of the Scherzo, which must prepare for a triumph. The triumph must be achieved by the composer: it is not part of a view of the world, as the world is readily experienced. In the Ninth, it is even necessary to introduce the absurd notion of a singer who interrupts the music to announce another solution. In a sense, the composer has given up his argument, but on the other hand, he cannot simply let Schiller's *Ode to Joy* juxtapose the less triumphant tones of the preceding movements. If not through a process, then the composer must make it possible through a surgical compositional device. In Beethoven's string quartets, the scheme is much less obvious, more refined, a closer investigation would certainly be necessary for an interpretation of this aspect.

For Mozart, conversely, the world is simply there. A composer will shed tears, be angry, feel fear, relief, love, delight, compassion—however we might read or react to the individual passages—but the necessity of struggling to overcome adversity does not really enter into this world view, as I hear his music. Trust in Providence makes such a struggling attitude superfluous. Thus also the two D-minor quartets, like so many of Mozart's works in minor keys marked by troubled emotions, can be read to support Fricsay's thesis and stand among the many Mozartian musical texts that tell us about his place in the spiritual history of Europe.[46]

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[46]I am very grateful to Nicolas Bell (British Library, London) for his valuable suggestions and help with the English language.

Music and the Ineffable

Eyolf Østrem

"The Ineffable" is a common topos in discussions about music, but what is this "Ineffable"? Given the lexical meaning of the word as "inexpressible, unspeakable, unutterable, transcendent," a question thus bluntly phrased cannot, of course, be answered. It does, however, imply a series of other questions and fields of investigation that can be made more precise and explicit, thereby opening a backdoor to the original query—to clarify why, being ultimately unanswerable, the question is nevertheless highly relevant.[1]

One such area, implied in the word "ineffable," concerns language: the ineffable is that which can not be uttered, spoken, or even spoken of—because there are no words for it, or for other reasons. What we are discussing here, then, concerns the limits of language and that which lies beyond. A deliberation about music and the ineffable would thus be incomplete without also touching upon the question of the "effable"—that which *can* be expressed by language. Second, "the Ineffable" is also one of the names of God. With this we enter the second main area of application: the realm of the religious, the subject matter of this volume: *Musical Representations of Religious Experience*. This title in turn introduces the third aspect where the term may come into play: that of musical representation in general, representation of experience in particular, and in the last instance the kind of experience that can be called "religious."

There are two main approaches to the task of rephrasing the question regarding the ineffable in music. One is predominantly historical and chronicles the assessment of the various views on music and its connection with religion and religious ideas throughout the ages. The other is more philosophical and concerns the wider question whether the historical evidence of the first line can be made fruitful in a more general theorizing about music and religion, through the concept of the ineffable in its various shapes. I will follow these two lines,

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[1]Some of the themes dealt with in this essay have been addressed previously, in an article of mine published in Norwegian, " 'Det Uudsigelige'. Sammenhengen mellom kristne og verdslige begrep om kunst," *Transfiguration* 2/1 (August 2000), pp. 59–86.

the first by charting various "stations" at important points in history, the second by addressing "the ineffable" in light of modern language philosophy.

The Ineffable God—Jerome and Augustine

A fundamental notion in the theological approach to the ineffable character of the divine, elaborated by the church fathers and perpetuated throughout the Middle Ages, is that God is ineffable. This notion comes in two slightly different versions. It can be found in the catalogue of the names of God alluded to above, *De deo et nominibus eius*, attributed to St. Jerome (ca. 340-420).[2] " 'The ineffable' is God's ninth name, written in the form of the tetragram. He is called ineffable, not because His name cannot be spoken, but because His limits cannot be set by reason and intellect, and also because nothing is worthy of being said about Him."[3] The explanation, "not because it cannot be spoken," can be read in two different ways: either "not because *the word* cannot be spoken" or "not *only* because it cannot be spoken," but because it exceeds reason on the whole.

A related characterization, which frequently occurs together with "the ineffable," and which agrees with the second interpretation ("not *only*"), is "the infinite." The sixth name of God in Jerome's catalogue is "who is" (*qui est*), which even includes God's eternity: "The name of Being truly befalls God alone, because He is eternal, i.e. has no beginning."[4] The two terms occur together in the oft-repeated quote from Hilary of Poitiers (d. 368):

[2]*Patrologiae cursus completus. Series latina* (henceforth cited as PL), J.-P. Migne , ed. (Paris 1844–1864), vol. 23, col. 1308B. The attribution to Jerome is probably false, but his authority is invoked in the introduction to the treatise, however, and I will refer to it by Jerome's name. Its contents show up in several encyclopaedic treatises during the Middle Ages, the most influential of which is Isidor's *Etymologiarum libri XX*, book 7, ch. 1, *De Deo* (PL 82, col. 261C). All translations from Latin into English, unless otherwise noted, are mine.

[3]Auctor incertus (Hieronymus Stridonensis?): *De deo et nominibus eius* (PL 23, col. 1308B): *Nonum, TETRA GRAMMATON, hoc est,* quatuor litterarum, *quod proprie apud Hebraeos in Deo ponitur, id est duabus IA, quae duplicata ineffabile illud et gloriosum Dei nomen efficiunt: dicitur autem ineffabilis, non quia dici non potest, sed quia finiri sensu et intellectu humano nullatenus potest, ideo nihil de eo digne dici potest, quia ineffabilis est.*

[4]*De deo et nominibus eius* (PL 23, col. 1307B): *Sextum, EHEIE, id est,* qui est: *Deus enim solus quia aeternus est, hoc est, quia exordium non habet, essentium nomen vere tenet.*

> The invisible, ineffable, and infinite God: before whom all speech falls silent, and the investigative sense weakens, and the comprehending intelligence is constrained.[5]

The same point is elaborated further by the anonymous 4th-century commentator Ambrosiaster, who by some has been identified as the same Hilary of Poitiers:

> When he [i.e. St. Paul; Eph. 3:18] says "breadth and length and height and depth," this means that just as in a sphere the length equals the width, and the height the depth, so all are equal in God, in the immensity of infinity. For a sphere ends in a definite way, but God not only fills everything, but also exceeds it; for He is not enclosed, but has everything within Him, as He alone is ineffable and infinite.[6]

From these three quotes we can extract a concept of the ineffable according to which God is ineffable because there are neither words nor concepts that can grasp his immensity—God exceeds *understanding* itself.

In this version, the ineffability of God is complete. In the other, represented by St. Augustine, the *total* ineffability is restricted to language. The connection between musical/poetic activities and the Divine goes as far back as we have philosophical writings about music. In ancient philosophy of art a distinction is often drawn, in one way or another, between poetry and the other arts.[7] This distinction was made, not to lower the status of poetry by excluding it from the arts, but, to the contrary, in the acknowledgment that poetry was a far more elevated undertaking than the base, mechanical arts;

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[5]Hilarius Pictaviensis, *De trinitate libri duodecim*, liber 2 (PL 10, col. 55B): *Deus invisibilis, ineffabilis, infinitus: ad quem et eloquendum sermo sileat, et investigandum sensus hebetetur, et complectendum intelligentia coartetur.*

[6]Ambrosiaster, *Commentaria in xiii epistolas beati pauli, In epistolam b. pauli ad ephesios* (PL 17, col. 384C): *Cum enim dicit:* Latitudo, et longitudo, et altitudo, et profundum; *hoc utique significat, ut sicut in sphaera tanta longitudo est, quanta latitudo, et tanta altitudo, quantum et profundum; ita et in Deo omnia aequalia sunt immensitate infinitatis. Sphaera enim definito modo concluditur: Deus autem non solum implet omnia, sed et excedit; nec enim clauditur, sed omnia intra se habet, ut solus ineffabilis et infinitus habeatur.*

[7]See Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz: *A History of Six Ideas: An essay in aesthetics* (The Hague, Boston, London: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980), particularly pp. 83-89. For the question of the grouping of the arts and the various concepts of art, see also Paul Oskar Kristeller: "The Modern System of the Arts," in *Renaissance Thought II: Papers on Humanism and the Arts* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965) and Østrem: "Det Uudsigelige."

while the arts were defined as *skills* based upon knowledge of certain rules—thus merely human achievements—poetry, according to Plato, was a divine gift, not governed by any such rules. He writes in *Phaedrus* that one of the frenzies to which people are subject comes from the Muses. When these pour inspiration upon a man, it

> inspires the soul to songs and other poetry. [...] But he who comes to the gate of poetry without the madness of the Muses, confident that he will be a good poet by his art alone, achieves nothing, and the sane man's poetry disappears before that of the mad man.[8]

And likewise in *Ion*:

> The muse inspires men herself and then by means of these inspired persons the inspiration spreads to others. [...] For all the good epic poets utter all those fine poems, not from art, but as inspired and possessed, and the good lyric poets likewise; [... The poet] is unable ever to indite (*poiein*) until he has been inspired and put out of his senses, and his mind is no longer in him. [...] For not by art do they utter these things, but by divine influence. [...] It is God himself who speaks and addresses us through them [...] We should not waver or doubt that these fine poems are not human or the work of men, but divine and the work of gods, and that the poets are merely the interpreters of the gods.[9]

Plato's mad poet is not only *reading* his poetry—he is singing it. Neither Greek language nor Greek thought differentiated clearly between song and poetry, so that in everything the ancients have to say about poetry, we are justified to read "music" as well.[10] And whereas poetry mostly lost its "semi-religious," divinatory character in a Christian medieval setting, that was not the case for music, which retained a central place in worship. Music, then, is the one area where the ancient idea of divine frenzy still had some bearing on medieval thought.

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[8]Plato: *Phaedrus* 245A, Loeb classical library (London: W. Heinemann, 1914), translation adapted after Harold North Fowler.

[9]Plato: *Ion* 533 E–534 E (London: W. Heinemann, 1925); trans. W.R.M. Lamb.

[10]This goes both ways: Boethius, the last of the ancient philosophers as well as the mentor of the Middle Ages, included poetry in his discussion of music. See Boethius, *De institutione musica*, PL 63, liber I, chapter 44).

The most interesting and influential treatment of this aspect of music is St. Augustine's discussions of *iubilatio*.[11] Here the connection that was missed in the first survey of the ineffable can be accommodated. Augustine says:

Sound is the understanding of the heart. [...] He who jubilates, speaks no words, it is rather a sound of joy without words. For it is the voice of a soul pouring over of joy, as much as it can, expressing its feeling, without understanding its meaning. [...] When, then, do we jubilate? When we praise what cannot be said. [...] Let us notice the whole creation, [...] in all of it there is something, *I don't know what* invisible, which is called spirit or soul, [...] which understands God, which pertains to the mind (*mentem*) properly speaking, which distinguishes between just and unjust, just as the eye does between white and black.[12]

What is it to sing in jubilation? To be unable to understand, to express in words, what is sung with the heart. For they who sing, either in the harvest, in the vineyard, or in some other arduous occupation, after beginning to manifest their gladness in the words of songs, when filled with such joy that they cannot express it in words, they turn away from the syllables of words and proceed to the sound of jubilation. The iubilus is that sound which signifies that the heart gives birth to what it cannot utter. And whom does jubilation befit but the ineffable God?[13]

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[11]There has been some dispute over whether he is referring to a specific liturgical genre (*iubilus*, the long, wordless melody which ends the Alleluia of the mass) or jubilation in general, but that problem can be disregarded in this connection.

[12]*Sonus enim cordis intellectus est. ... Qui iubilat, non verba dicit, sed sonus quidam est letitie sine verbis; vox est enim animi diffusi letitia, quantum potest, exprimentis affectum, non sensum comprehendentis. ... Quando ergo nos iubilamus? quando laudamus quod dici non potest. ... Adtendimus enim universam creaturam, ... inque his omnibus nescio quid invisibile, quod spiritus vel alma dicitur, ... quod intellegat Deum, quod ad mentem proprie pertineat, quod sicut oculus album et nigrum, ita aequitatem iniquitatemque discernat.* Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos* [Corpus Christianorum, series latina 38-40: Aurelii Augustini Opera, pars X, 1-3] (Turnholt: Brepols, 1956), psalm 99, ch. 3-5 , vol. 39 (X/2), pp. 1394-1396.

[13] *Quid est in iubilatione canere? Intellegere, verbis explicare non posse quod canitur corde. Etenim illi qui cantant, sive in messe, sive in vinea, sive in aliquo opere ferventi, cum coeperint in verbis canticorum exsultare letitia, veluti impleti tanta letitia, ut eam verbis explicare non possint, avertunt se a syllabis verborum, et eunt in sonum iubilationis. Iubilum sonus quidam est significans cor parturire quod dicere non potest. et quem decet ista iubilatio, nisi ineffabilem Deum?* Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos* 32, 8; vol. 38, p. 254).

Augustine plunges right into some of the most central—and impenetrable —aesthetic problems. He includes in the two short passages so many central concepts that one can derive from them an entire theoretical system. Two conceptual areas are opposed to each other: that of feeling and that of rational thought. On the one hand is the heart, joy, feeling (*affectus*), song, sound— that which cannot be expressed in words. On the other hand there are the words and their meaning, that which can be explained, *i.e.* the *conceptual*. These areas are contrasted and tied together on different levels, the funda- mental contrast being that between what can and what cannot be expressed in words. This pair of opposites is then connected with a similar one: the contrast between reason and emotions. Rational thought is identified with a conceptual, verbal understanding—emotion is identified with the wordless.

The next level consists of the identification of emotion with *sound*, i.e. the *sensual*, and hence the contrast between the conceptual and the sensual, which is perhaps most clearly expressed in the metaphorical description of jubilation as "the heart [giving] birth to what it cannot utter": song becomes a purely corporeal, sensual phenomenon which cannot be tied to any conceptual content. Yet another connection, more or less explicitly expressed, is that of emotion (joy) with the soul, and—through the soul's connection with the divine—with God. The sensual becomes, through its ineffability, the path to a direct contact with God, who is the ultimate ineffable.

A reading of this passage along these lines would be: Augustine juxtaposes the areas of feeling and of rational thought: he identifies the rational with that which can be expressed in words (i.e., the verbal or *conceptual*), and equals *the heart* (i.e. feeling) with the ear, with *song*, or even more generally with art in the wider sense of man-made beauty. Even though the sphere of the senses is separated from the conceptual and rational, it nevertheless has its own "understanding," which is associated with the sensuous experience of sound. In a more generalized sense this means that the language of feeling can only be understood on its own terms, it cannot be rationalized. "Sound is the understanding of the heart," i.e., the understanding of the heart can only be reached, or express itself, through sound.

The connection between music and the ineffable thus established is an identification by analogy. Augustine does not discuss the finer points of the analogy in any detail, but it is understood that he has in mind the identifi- cation between the sensual, ineffable joy and the likewise ineffable God, who thus can best be praised through wordless jubilation. This is in accordance with Augustine's general use of analogy: that "the physical aspect of each analogical similitude is indispensable to its higher meaning" and that

"the *invisibilia* of God can be understood through the *visibilia* of this world."[14]

By distinguishing between feeling and rational thought, and by ascribing a mode of understanding to both, Augustine gets around the absolute of God's impenetrable ineffability: it may not be possible to grasp God's essence through rational thought, but it may not be necessary either. God may exceed language, but the conceptual understanding through language may not be the only way to understand.

Even this notion is actually made explicit in a commentary, explicitly on the *iubilus*, in Amalarius of Metz's (d. ca. 850) *De ecclesiasticis officiis*:

> This jubilation, which singers call a *sequentia*, brings such a state
> to our mind that the utterance of words is not necessary, but by
> thought alone will mind will show mind what it has within itself.[15]

The central notion here is that "the utterance of words is not necessary," since mind will show mind by thought alone—which we may take as an expression more or less equivalent to Augustine's "understanding of the heart." I.e. there may be something to be conveyed in music, and it can be conveyed, albeit not in words.

The "Middle Ages"—between Augustine and Wackenroder

For a long time, Jerome's notion of a God beyond understanding—hence also beyond comparison with music—remained the predominant view. Although Augustine's discussion of the *iubilus* was repeated throughout the Middle Ages,[16] and the Carolingian theologians certainly discuss religious

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[14]Theodore Bogdanos, *Pearl: Image of the Ineffable, A Study in Medieval Poetic Symbolism*, University Park/London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983, p. 7. Bogdanos uses as an example the "prerequisite necessity of having experienced sensuously the oil's smooth surface in order to comprehend the olive twig that Noah's dove brought back to the ark as a symbol of God's mercy" (1983:7; cf. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* [PL 34] 2:16).

[15]*Haec iubilatio, quam cantores sequentiam vocant, illum statum ad mentem nostram ducit, quando non erit necessaria locutio verborum, sed sola cogitatione mens menti monstrabit quod retinet in se.* Amalarius of Metz as quoted in I.M. Hanssens, ed., *Amalarii Episcopi Opera Liturgica Omnia* II, Studi e testi 140 (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1948), p. 304, reads:

[16]Cf. Bede (?) *De psalmorum libro exegesis*, Ps. 26 (PL 93, col. 616C), Walafridus Strabo, *Liber psalmorum*. Ps. 88 (PL 113, col. 994A) and elsewhere.

aspects of music, their main concerns centered in the theological legitimation and function of chant (such as various allegorical functions, praise and the correct use of the affective effects of music).[17] During this period, the specific speculation about questions of musical meaning was put temporarily on hold.

One of the reasons for this is the predominantly practical, functional role of music in medieval liturgy, and its canonization in Carolingian times: the emphasis lies on the effects and functions of *singing* rather than of *song*.

The other main reason is the position that music had within the *artes liberales*. With this position and the handful of key books that were used throughout the medieval period—first and foremost Boethius—came a fixation of the questions asked and the answers given about music, which remained unchanged for several hundred years. The centrality of this position is evident already from the Carolingian writer, Aurelianus of Réôme, who in his *Musica disciplina* strongly emphasizes the students' need of a deeper understanding of music according to the quadrivial *ars musica*, in order to be not merely "singers" but "musicians."[18] Aurelianus is among the first to emphasize this connection, but he is certainly not the last.

Music thereby enters a long-ranging tradition of ideas that, in one sense, can be regarded as an attempt to skirt the problem of the ineffable: what Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz calls The Great Theory of Beauty.[19] The notion that beauty can be defined through numbers and the orderly and proportionate arrangement of parts, goes back to the Pythagoreans and was still central to both Plato and Aristotle.[20] The objectivist concept of beauty remained valid in the medieval *artes liberales*, where the mathematical disciplines had priority. Not until the 18th century was this mathematical, rationalistic view of beauty totally abandoned.

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[17]See Anders Ekenberg: *Cur cantatur? Die Funktionen des liturgischen Gesanges nach den Autoren der Karolingerzeit*, Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell, 1987, particularly pp. 153–188.

[18]Ekenberg, *Cur cantatur?*, p. 143.

[19]Tatarkiewicz, *Six ideas*, pp. 125-133.

[20]Cf. Plato, "What is beautiful cannot lack proportion," *Timaeus* 87C (London: W. Heinemann, 1929), and "The maintenance of measure and proportion is always beautiful— the absence of measure is ugly," *Sophista* 228A (London: W. Heinemann, 1921). See also Aristotle: "Beauty consists in magnitude and ordered arrangement" in *De Poetica* 1450b 38 (London: W. Heinemann, 1985; all three Heinemann volumes are part of *Loeb Classical Library*).

Despite the objectivist appearance of the theory, however, its intended answers chiefly lie in the range from the ontological to the mystical. When transferred to a medieval, Christian context, this aspect of the theory received an extra theological twist in both areas. While the idea of beauty as something positive, residing in measure and proportion, was specifically Greek and foreign to Hebrew thinking, during the Hellenistic period it found its way into two books of the Bible: Ecclesiasticus 1:9, "He created her [i.e. wisdom], and saw her, and numbered her," and The Book of Wisdom 11:21 (20 in the King James Bible): "thou hast ordered all things in measure and number and weight." The most influential consequence of this quiet infiltration was that it introduced Greek cosmology into biblical ontology, explaining the essence of the universe to be order (*kosmos*).[21] In our present context, an even more important consequence is the relation that is established between the creator and the creation: this order of the creation is a reflection of the order of the creator, and the one can be perceived through the other: "For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator." (Wisd. 13:5). Thus the study of the order of the universe allows a glimpse through the door that is in principle kept shut in Jerome's account of the ineffable God.

The mystical area was just as important: behind the dry facade of beauty as numbers lies the notion that numbers and numerical relations are reflections of the divine principles governing the universe; that we find the same relations in the universe as a whole, in human beings, in musical sounds, and in visible beauty. Nature can be regarded as a work of art by God, and to imitate nature, e.g. in a painting or in music, through the use of the same proportions as in nature, is fundamentally to imitate general laws, divine principles. Furthermore, God was identified with beauty as its cause or, more emphatically, beauty being one of God's attributes, thus giving the Great Theory a theological foundation.

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[21]The Hebrew word used to describe God's appreciation of the Creation on the sixth day translates as "successful" or "good." In the Septuagint the word is καλος, "beautiful." This may be read as a shift in the direction of the Great Theory, brought about by the influence from the Hellenistic milieu in Alexandria at the time the Septuagint was translated, but it can also be accounted for by the possible wider translation of καλος as "good, useful, purposeful," i.e. more or less the same kind of evaluation as in the Hebrew version. See Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz: *History of Aesthetics, vol II: Medieval Aesthetics* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1970), pp. 4–12 for a further discussion of biblical aesthetics.

How profound the analogical perspective was for the quadrivial music theory is illustrated by Kepler's reaction to the discovery that the planetary orbits were elliptical and not round:

> [H]e argued that God's intention had become clear at last: the elliptic orbit enabled a planet to produce not a single note but several, and so planetary music was in fact an eternal six-part polyphonic song, complete with dissonances and their resolutions, suspensions, *clausulae* etc. The argument explained in addition why man, in imitation of God, had eventually succeeded in inventing polyphonic music.[22]

The allegory is not drawn from properties of the music itself. On the contrary: the properties of music are re-interpreted in response to a changed opinion about that of which music was thought to be a reflection.

Despite Augustine's emphasis of the physical roots of the analogy between music and God, it is likewise clear that to him quadrivial music theory concerns a purely rational beauty, where the sounding music is the least important element, even a "corporeal noise" that stands in the way of the "supernal sounds, utterly delectable, incomparable and ineffable":

> [Mind] elevates its hearing to that internal voice of God; it hears a rational song within itself. For in such a way it sounds, from above, in silence, not for the ears but for the minds, so that whoever hears that song will be bored by the corporeal noise, and all of this human life will be a disturbance for him, which hinders the hearing of the supernal sounds, utterly delectable, incomparable and ineffable.[23]

If we relate quadrivial music theory to the wider question of the meaning of music, it appears as an attempt to rationalize the understanding of music along lines other than those related to language: as a third way beside Jerome and Augustine—more specific about its answers, but also more limited in scope, as a precise description of *one* side of the analogy. We may say—to

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[22]Frits Noske, *Music Bridging Divided Religions* (Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel Verlag, 1989), p. 27.

[23]*Erigit auditum in illam vocem Dei internam, audit rationabile carmen intrinsecus. Ita enim desuper in silentio sonat quiddam, non auribus, sed mentibus; ut quicumque audit illud melos, taedio afficiatur ad strepitum corporalem, et tota ista vita humana tumultus ei quidam sit, impediens auditum superni cujusdam soni nimium delectabilis, et incomparabilis, et ineffabilis.* Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos* 42, ch. 7, vol. 38, p. 479.

return to the door metaphor—that despite the glimpse through the door, no real attempt was made to force the door more open—to connect music with the divine, or to give music the capacity to "say" something, about religious experience or anything else—beyond what was provided by the overall analogical perspective.

Along with the development of polyphony and the professionalization of the composer beginning in the 13th century, the quadrivial *musica speculativa* was complemented with an interest in the theoretical foundations of compositional practice. This is all of a very practical nature, and the question of the divine nature of music is not relevant in this connection. Neither is the question of musical meaning. There is on the whole no direct connection between the most prominent representatives of church music and theological speculation, nor are there any specific characteristics of church music that sets it apart from secular music. Quite to the contrary: as Reinhard Strohm has shown, the important development of the polyphonic mass in the 15th century mainly took place in *secular* chapels and would have been inconceivable outside this milieu.[24] Furthermore, on the occasions when a clear line of demarcation was drawn between the secular and the sacred, e.g., at the council of Trent, the theological controversy over church music did not concern the music itself, but its various associative connections to secular music through texts, dance rhythms, and the use of secular *cantus firmi*. From the purely musical point of view, Palestrina's compositional technique and harmonical thinking is essentially the same as that which Gesualdo uses in his madrigals to create his harmonical extremes: tonal progressions that would in themselves have been fully acceptable are rendered extreme because other vocal groups are simultaneously engaged in similar progressions, or because tones are re-evaluated harmonically or functionally in the course of the passage. The distance is not so great, after all, between the two poles of the late Renaissance, and whatever sacred there is about Palestrina, it does not reside in his music. Only in hindsight did Palestrina's music become specifically "sacred," but this was owing to its symbolic role in the Counter-Reformation and the conservatism of the Roman church during turbulent times, rather than to any properties of the music.

One of the ideas that developed quickly was the notion of a relation between music and language. Stating that such a notion developed is easier than pinpointing the starting point of the development, but that is hardly

[24]Reinhard Strohm, *The Rise of European Music 1380–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). pp. 269-320.

necessary for the present argument. Suffice it to say that at one point no such connections were drawn, and at another point—a century or two later—this connection was crucial to the development of the central musical genres, eventually also to aesthetics in general.

Most elements of this development can be traced back to the Italian Renaissance with "its clearly appropriate context of secularism, sensuousness, and individual expression."[25] A more immediate cause is the approximation between the visual arts, poetry, and music, and the conflation of the theoretical foundations of these activities, which up to then had been regarded as separate.

For music's part the influences from poetics and rhetoric were particularly important. On the poetic side two trends, both occurring in the first half of the 16th century, were consequential: the discovery and subsequent dissemination of Aristotle's *De Poetica*, and Pietro Bembo's treatise on Petrarcan poetics, which was to become instrumental in the development of the madrigal in both its ideals and its techniques.[26] Most composers would, of course, have been familiar with rhetoric as a liberal art, but in the 16th and 17th centuries this connection changed both music theory, terminology and praxis.

The consequences of this development lead in two directions, both of them important for our subject. On the one hand, it is now legitimate to talk about meaning in music more in specific and less in allegorical terms;[27] on the other hand, it is still arguable how much of this meaning is actually *musical*. Many of the rhetorical terms in 17th-century manuals seem to be technical, borrowed from figures of speech more for their external similarity than for any actual rhetorical function. And although Bembo's program and Willaert's and Rore's adaptation of it for their madrigals involved a conscious treatment of the relation between sounding structures and contents in both language and music, the composers' initial concern was with phrasing just as much as with contents. There is, in other words, a tendency to regard music as meaningful in ways that are similar to language, but the use of poetic or rhetorical models

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[25]Lippman, Edward: *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics*, Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992, p. 19.

[26]See Dean T. Mace, "Pietro Bembo and the literary origins of the Italian Madrigal," *The Musical Quarterly* 55 (1969), pp. 65–86 and Martha Feldman, *City Culture and the Madrigal at Venice*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press.

[27]Cf. Martha Feldman's "Rore's 'selva selvaggia': The *Primo libro* of 1542," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 42 (1989), pp. 547–603, for a lucid close reading of a Rore-madrigal, which shows just how integrated the text and the music are.

is still either on the premises of language, or neutral, purely technical; there *is* no "absolute" Renaissance music; neither is there an ineffable side to it.

The Ineffable in Romantic Music Aesthetics

After having taken a less prominent position during the Middle Ages, the notion of the ineffable in music returned with full force in Romantic aesthetics, where ideas emerge that are strikingly similar to Augustine's division between the rational and conceptual on the one hand and the "trinity" of the ineffable, the emotional, and the sensual on the other.[28] The connection between music and the religious is now made explicit, both in theory and in practical composition, leading to what almost amounts to a new genre: non-liturgical religious music. I would like to point to three of the preconditions for this development, concerning particularly the question how music achieved the capacity to "express religious experiences" outside the fixed, functional frames established for religious praxis: how music could become "religious."[29]

First, the slow but steady downfall of the privileged position of the biblical world view during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment led several thinkers to re-evaluate language. Rousseau maintained, as Sven-Eric Liedman reads him, that "the earliest language lacked concepts, properly speaking. Words thus did not refer to any specific objects or conceptions, but were means to express *emotions*. The origin of language was in fact inseparable from that of music and song."[30] The aesthetics that can be inferred from this, which is closely related to that of St. Augustine, rests on the claim that music is basically sensuous and cannot be verbalized; that music is the direct language of the feelings, unhindered by rational concepts. This notion became one of the cornerstones of Romantic music aesthetics. The first tentative version was proposed by two friends, Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder and Ludwig Tieck, the author and *Musikliebhaber* who in his part of their 1799 *Phantasien über die Kunst* proclaimed autonomy for music when he wrote that instrumental

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[28]See Nils Holger Petersen: "Liturgy and Musical Composition," in *Studia Theologica* 50 (1996), pp. 135-136 for a similar comparison between Augustine and Romantic music aesthetics.

[29]For a more thorough, yet also more "theological" account of this aspect see Oskar Söhngen, *Theologie der Musik* (Kassel: Johannes Stauda Verlag, 1967).

[30]Translated from Sven-Eric Liedman, *I skuggan av framtiden, modernitetens idéhistoria* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1997), p. 148.

music is "a world of its own" (eine Welt für sich selbst).[31] Tieck was later followed by E.T.A. Hoffmann, Arthur Schopenhauer, and others. The emphasis these writers placed on instrumental music is essential precisely because it—unlike vocal music, but like the *iubilus*—is free from influences derived from words and like no other art able to "articulate in pure form the distinctive essence of art," as Hoffmann phrased it.[32] Music is not an imitation of emotions, it is the vehicle through which emotions can express themselves directly, without the detour through conceptual language.[33] For a brief period this notion gave music the position of *primus inter pares* among the arts. It was a common, implication at the time—implicitly or explicitly stated— that what could be said about (non-vocal) music was to be considered an aspired ideal also for the other arts. Arthur Schopenhauer wrote: "To become like music is the goal of every art."[34] The non-rational, ineffable character of art thus became its foremost quality. One can hardly overemphasize the import-ance of this "paradigm shift" from vocal to instrumental music.[35] At the same time, one needs to keep in mind that its roots lay in a changed understanding of language.

Several authors have explained the Romantic movement as an essentially *literary* phenomenon.[36] This concerns the literary interest among composers, the direct influence from literary scholars such as Jean Paul and Klopstock, as well as the literary background of several of the central aestheticians.

[31]Ludwig Tieck & Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, *Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst*, part II, ch. 8, in Wilhem Heinrich Wackenroder, *Werke und Briefe* (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1967), p. 245.

[32]"welche ... das eigentümliche, nur in ihr zu erkennende Wesen der Kunst rein ausspricht" E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Schriften zur Musik; Nachlese*, Friedrich Schnapp, ed. (Munich: Winkler, 1963), pp. 34-35.

[33]For this aspect of Romantic aesthetics, see Carl Dahlhaus, *Klassische und romantische Musikästhetik* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag,1988), pp. 15-19.

[34]"Wie die Musik zu werden ist das Ziel jeder Kunst"; Eduard Grisebach, ed., *Artur Schopenhauers handschriftlicher Nachlaß* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1891–1892), vol. IV, p. 31.

[35]"[D]er 'Paradigmenwechsel' von der Vokal- zur Instrumentalmusik als Anschauungsmodell ästhetischer Theorie war der ideengeschichtliche entscheidende Schritt der romantischen Musikästhetik Wackenroders, Tiecks, E. T. A. Hoffmanns und Schopenhauers." Dahlhaus, *Klassische und Romantische Musikästhetik*, p. 148.

[36]Gerald Abraham states that the Romantic composers were "romantic because they were literary, not literary because they were romantic" (*A Hundred Years of Music* [London: Duckworth, 1974], p. 22). This aspect has been developed in more depth by Carl Dahlhaus, *Klassische und romantische Musikästhetik*, pp. 90-93.

As Dahlhaus observed, the aesthetic consequences at which Wackenroder arrived rise well above his musical prerequisites, in which his aesthetics was only partially grounded.[37] The literary influence in turn relies, of course, on the unified concept of art and the mutual influences between the different art theories, among which literary and rhetorical theory were particularly important for music.

The literary movement is not the only root of Romantic music aesthetics. In the following quotation from Wackenroder's chapter from *Phantasien über die Kunst*, "Das Eigentümliche innere Wesen der Tonkunst, und die Seelenlehre der heutigen Instrumentalmusik" (The distinctive internal essence of the musical art, and the teaching about the soul in contemporary instrumental music), one recognizes both the prophetic element of the ancient Greek *furor poeticus* and the mathematical relations among tones of the Great Theory.

> The monochrome ray of reverberation is scattered into a multicolored, glittering firework, which shimmers with all the hues of the rainbow. This, however, could not have happened had not several wise men first descended into the oracle-bearing caves of the most concealed science, where all-engendering nature herself disclosed to them the original laws of sound. [...] Yet the dark and indescribable, which is hidden in the effect of sound and not to be found in any other art form, has gained through this process a wonderous significance. An inexplicable sympathy has been revealed to reign between the individual mathematical relations of tones and individual fibers of the human heart.[38]

The close bonds that had existed, up to the Renaissance, between the different arts and various kinds of mysticism, disappeared during the period

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[37]"[...] allerdings erheben sich die ästhetischen Konsequenzen, zu denen Wackenroder gelangte, weit über seine musikalischen Voraussetzungen, in denen seine Ästhetik nur zum Teil begründet war." Dahlhaus, *Klassische und romantische Musikästhetik*, p. 90.

[38]"Der einfarbige Lichtstrahl des Schalls ist in ein buntes, funkelndes Kunstfeuer zersplittert, worin alle Farben des Regenbogens flimmern; dies konnte aber nicht anders geschehen, als daß zuvor mehrere weise Männer in die Orakelhöhlen der verborgensten Wissenschaft hinunterstiegen, wo die allzeugende Natur selbst ihnen die Urgesetze des Tons enthüllte. [...] Das Dunkle und Unbeschreibliche aber, welches in der Wirkung des Tons verborgen liegt, und welches bei keiner andern Kunst zu finden ist, hat durch das System eine wunderbare Bedeutsamkeit gewonnen. Es hat sich zwischen den einzelnen mathematischen Tonverhältnissen und den einzelnen Fibern des menschlichen Herzens eine unerklärliche Sympathie offenbart." Tieck & Wackenroder, *Phantasien über die Kunst* II, ch. 5 (in Wackenroder, *Werke und Briefe*, p. 218-219).

that saw the final merging between the concepts of art and beauty, when the Cartesian movement purged the arts of all religious mystique and in rationalistic zeal tried to lay down the rules governing artistic production.[39]

But even in the most extreme moments of the Cartesian period—or maybe especially then—it was quickly understood that everything could not be laid down in rules: the most successful works often evade the rules of the book, while the works that appear perfect in theory are often extremely boring, as already Plato had expressed it two thousand years earlier. One of the central concepts of 17th-century aesthetics, *le goût* (taste)[40] or its close relative, *non so che* or *je ne sais quoi* (I don't know what), could be described as that which remains unaccounted for when music (or art) is evoked using the common, rationalistic explanations of the time. In a treatise on painting, the cinquecento art theorist, Lodovico Dolce, claims Rafael's superiority over Michelangelo with reference to a *je ne sais quoi*, which can only be realized through the senses and which therefore is not covered by classical theories that search rules and rational forms.[41] And Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, writing in late-17th-century France, used the term *je ne sais quoi* in close connection with "the sublime." The latter concept came into use through Boileau-Despréaux's own translation in 1672 of Pseudo-Longinus's treatise *De sublimitate*, as a term no longer denoting a lofty style, but associated with grandeur of thought and profundity of emotions. Eventually it was even linked with the terrifying,[42] and in this quality points at another aspect of the ineffable that invited its being drawn into music aesthetics.

This concept of the arts, which focuses on notions of the ineffable and the sublime, presented the precondition for the reassessment of the artist-craftsman and the making of the genius. The Genius, as Sir Joshua Reynolds put it in his 1778 *Discourses on Art*, was thought of as someone who can

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[39]The three founders of modern aesthetics, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, Charles Batteux, and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, were all strongly influenced by Cartesian methodology and epistemology. See Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1966), pp. 156-166. Thus even in this perspective the modern concept of the arts can be seen as a direct descendant of rationalism.

[40]See Dabney Townsend, "Taste: Early history," *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 355–360, particularly p. 356.

[41]Lodovico Dolce, *Dialogo della pittura intitolato l'Aretino* (Venezia, 1557).

[42]For more information see Tatarkiewicz, *Six ideas*, p. 172-173.

"produce excellencies, which are out of reach of the rules of art."[43] He can achieve this because he has an intuitive knowledge of the *aesthetic idea*. Contemporary to Reynolds, Kant defines the aesthetic idea in a way that is strikingly similar to Augustine's description of jubilation, as

> that representation of the Imagination which occasions much thought, without, however, any definite thought, i.e., any *concept*, being capable of being adequate to it; it consequently cannot be completely compassed and made intelligible by language,[44]

i.e. as something lying beyond concepts and language: the ineffable, the sublime, the *Non so chè*.

With few exceptions *all* the important developments of religious music took place in a secular setting. This can be traced back as far as the beginning of the development of the polyphonic mass in the *secular* Burgundian chapels in the fifteenth century. That Augustine's notion of the non-conceptual element of music as expressing the ineffable and the divine would resurface in a period when "the divine," generally speaking, was less important and church music was on a steady decline, should not be taken as a paradox, but as an element in a historically determined situation.

On the one hand, it is obvious and without doubt that the Enlightenment was an age of secularization. This is evident not only from the philosophical and ideological currents of the age, but also from notable changes in official church attendance. The degree to which the attitudes of single individuals towards religious praxis reflected the overall trend is substantiated most impressively through, e.g., communion statistics, which show that in Hamburg during the thirty-two years between 1784 and 1816, there was a 60% decline in the number of communion participants.[45] On the other hand, to consider only secularization is to see only one half of the picture, the other half being the intended sacralization of secular life. A central notion in Lutheran

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[43]Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art* VI, Robert R. Wark, ed. (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1959), p. 96; quoted from Beardsley, *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present*, p. 151.

[44]Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J.H. Bernard (London: Macmillan, 1914), p. 197. The original wording in *Kritik der Urteilskraft* §49 is: "Unter einer ästhetischen Idee aber verstehe ich diejenige Vorstellung der Einbildungskraft, die viel zu denken veranlaßt, ohne daß ihr doch irgendein bestimmter Gedanke, d. i. *Begriff*, adäquat sein kann, die folglich keine Sprache völlig erreicht und verständlich machen kann."

[45]Alfred Ehrensperger, *Die Theorie des Gottesdienstes in der späten deutschen Aufklärung (1770–1815)*, (Zurich: Ph.D. dissertation, 1971), p. 86.

theology was that Divine Service was not to be limited to a cult at a particular time and place, but should permeate every aspect of a Christian's life. This is reflected in a change in the use of the term "liturgy," which was both narrowed down and extended. In its wider sense, it changed from the meaning it has in the Septuagint, as a technical term for official cultic activities, to the sense that is implied in the New Testament, signifying all that which is done in God's honor and from faith. In the narrower sense, religious ceremonies lost whatever fundamental functions they may have had as intermediaries between God and Man and were reduced to a matter of order, as in 1 Cor 14:40: "all things should be done decently and in order"—a pedagogical order, necessary for the weak, but theologically neutral.[46]

Novel in this are the distinctions, not only between the sacred and the secular, but just as much between a private and an official sphere, and the new role of religious music should be understood as the outcome of a reshuffling of functions caused by this dual separation. The polyphonic mass, e.g., fulfilled several functions; beyond its obvious role in religious ritual it also assumed aesthetic and even political purposes.[47] Church music had been the most prestigious area for the highest art of music composition. With the "de-cultification" (Ent-kultung[48]) of liturgy, especially in the more categorical Zwinglian and Calvinist forms, and in Luther's more liberal version, where music was still permitted in the Service but with little more than its didactic function left, it lost its privileged position. However, as Frits Noske reminds us, Zwingli's and Calvin's negative attitudes towards music were restricted

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[46]See Oskar Söhngen, "Theologische, geistes- und musikgeschichtliche Voraussetzungen der Entstehung der außerliturgischen religiösen Musik im 19. Jahrhundert," *Religiöse Musik in nicht-liturgischen Werken von Beethoven bis Reger*, Walter Wiora with Günther Massenkeil and Klaus Wolfgang Niemöller, eds. (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1978), p. 20.

[47]While it is not unproblematic to use the term "aesthetic" when speaking about Renaissance music, this usage seems justified by the evidence presented in Jeffrey Dean, "Listening to sacred polyphony c. 1500," *Early Music* 25/ 4 (November 1997): 611–637. Referring to the use of polyphonic music in the early-17th-century papal chapel, Dean emphasizes that, liturgically speaking, polyphonic music was unnecessary if not unwanted; "the actual listeners, the expected listeners, the listeners for whom the music was composed and performed, comprised the singers themselves and a few sympathetic outsiders. I believe the response that was aimed at was one conditioned not so much by ritual expectations as by musical ones; that aesthetic or technical judgements [...] were expected to form the basis of a proper appreciation of the music. [...] If we wish to perform, to hear, to study this music as those who first made it did, we should approach it not as an element of a now incomprehensible ritual but as a sort of sacred chamber music" (p. 628).

[48]Söhngen, "Theologische, geistes- und musikgeschichtliche Voraussetzungen ...," p. 20.

to *public* worship, whereas, as ample evidence demonstrates, music was used and encouraged in *private* worship even in the two reformers' own circles.[49] Moreover, new institutions and practices emerge that fulfill more or less the same function for more or less the same audience, frequently even in the same place: the church,[50] and it is not unlikely that music in these new surroundings, where the emphasis was more unashamedly on aesthetic enjoyment, nevertheless carried with it associations of its former religious function.

The most extreme result of the reshuffling of functions is the development of a "religion of art,"[51] which played a prominent role in the aesthetics of Wackenroder and others around the year 1800. Wackenroder says about his "art-loving monastic Brother," Berglinger, that when he attended concerts, he "listened with precisely the same reverence (*Andacht*) as if he were in church."[52] The roots of this musical *Andacht* go back to the patristic discussions of music and the Renaissance enumerations of the effects of music. In Wackenroder, however (and even more so in later thinkers, such as Hans Georg Nägeli and Eduard Hanslick), the word appears in a context that is rather independent of its former function, as a path to God. *Andacht* now refers instead to a way that, transcending even the musical material, would lead directly to the Absolute Idea.[53] Here, as in numerous other cases, it is remarkable how replete the writing on musical aesthetic is with references to theological concepts; it is often difficult to decide whether or not the references are metaphorical in nature.

The degree to which art took over elements from religion, even turning its relation with it upside down, is nowhere more evident than in Friedrich Schiller's comment concerning his hopes for musical activities supported by the State: "Since one is ashamed of being religious and wishes to pass

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[49]Noske, *Music Bridging Divided Religions*, p. 30.

[50]Söhngen, "Theologische, geistes- und musikgeschichtliche Voraussetzungen ...," pp. 30-34, mentions the Hamburger *Abendmusiken*, the Dordrechter organ recitals before or after church, and several similar semi-institutions. For all these it is hard to draw a precise line between public (bourgeouis) entertainment and private devotion.

[51]For a more extensive discussion of this notion see Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-century music* trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 94-96.

[52]Wackenroder, *Werke und Briefe*, p. 115.

[53]See Adolf Nowak, "Religiöse Begriffe in der Musikästhetik des 19. Jahrhunderts," in Wiora et al., *Religiöse Musik in nicht-liturgischen Werken ...*, pp. 54-56.

for enlightened, one must be very glad to be able to come to the aid of religion through art."[54]

Philosophical Investigations of the Ineffable

If both Augustine and the Romantics considered the ineffable to be the essence of music, where does that leave us? Just because we can read texts that are separated in time by centuries can be analyzed in a way that makes them say basically the same thing, this does not mean that the concepts behind them are necessarily the same, nor, if this were the case, that there must be an unbroken continuity between instances of the same idea. Are there, then, traits on an epistemological level that can explain the similar conceptions about music, or are they just historically situated facts that happen to be similar?

Taking the common sensual experience of music as a point of departure one can only affirm that music is clearly meaningful; it can be understood, and it may even have the ability to express something, although it may not be capable of *saying* something. Music, as it has often been stated, is a syntax without a semantical and conceptual level. Or, as Theodor Adorno put it: "Time and again [music] points to the fact that it signifies something, something definite. Only the intention is always veiled."[55] Thus, the first question is not: *What* does music mean? but rather: *How* does music mean? Music is the cultural production or activity that comes closest to language both in medium—sound—and in complexity of structure, while at the same time being the one that least obviously can make claims on a *conceptual* level of meaning. This is what gives it the impression of saying something, without actually doing so. The meaning is veiled in the same way as the meaning of an utterance in a language that one does not understand is veiled: there seems to be a meaning conveyed, but it is hidden. The meaning of music appears veiled because an interpretation of the object (the music) is attempted using a wrong—although related—set of criteria for meaning creation.

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[54]"Da man sich schämt, selbst Religion zu haben und für aufgeklärt passieren will, so muß man sehr froh sein, der Religion von der Kunst aus zu Hilfe kommen zu können." *Schillers Briefe, kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Fritz Jonas, ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1892-1897), vol. 7, pp. 165-166.

[55]Theodor Adorno, "Music, language and composition," trans. Susan Gillespie, *Musical Quarterly* 77 (1993): 401–414 (originally published as "Musik, Sprache, und ihr Verhältnis im gegenwärtigen Komponieren," *Gesammelte Schriften* 16 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), pp. 649–664.

Regarded this way, the experience of music is analogous to other kinds of experiences that are not understandable, that go beyond the intelligible, but where a meaning is often desired: matters of faith, life and death, emotional and physical experience—all areas for which religion offers an opportunity to discover answers to what we, for some reason or other, cannot know.

The analogy with language is thus one possible way of answering the question how music means, through the parallel question: How does language mean? The point I would like to elaborate is twofold. Principally, all music-language comparisons face a problem owing to the lack of a conceptual referent in music. However, with the cancelling of the referent even in language—a suggestion discussed in language philosophy in the traditions after Saussure and Wittgenstein—the originally perceived non-analogy is no longer an obstacle, and the word-music relationship may perhaps be construed in new ways.

Viewed in this way, music becomes meaningful in much the same way as Wittgenstein in his *Philosophische Untersuchungen* has claimed for language. A word or an utterance is meaningful not because of any kind of connection between the word and a referent in the outside world, but through knowledge, acquired through praxis, of how it is *used*.[56] A certain sound structure (a "word") is connected with an experience of something. Repeated exposure to the connection and the regularity with which the sound is accompanied by the experience result in a learning of the word's meaning. Meaning thus lies in a habitual fulfillment of the expectation that this kind of connection takes place, and in the constant adjustment of expectations against the experienced fulfillment. A prerequisite for meaning of this kind is a general agreement in the language community about what counts as a correct use of a word—how the language game is played correctly.

These, then, are the pertinent rules for a correct utterance, which all users of a language know in an internalized way and which depend on their practical knowledge of—or rather, their practical skills in—the language and the use of its various elements in different situations. Seen in this perspective, the difference between understanding a language and understanding music becomes one of diverse sets of rules (such as those that would apply in different languages), rather than one of fundamentally different ways of creating meaning. Understanding music depends upon musical skills of a similar kind, and meaning in music is constructed through the same web of

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[56]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, transl. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), § 43.

expectations, norms, and techniques: that which in music is covered fairly well by the concept of *style*, which can be defined as an open-ended system of rules and practices, which can be learnt by heart (internalized), without the need of explicit knowledge of the governing rules, and which leads to a non-conceptual, immediate musical understanding which is comparable in *kind* but not in *substance* with the conceptual understanding of a language.[57]

Musical meaning in this sense is inherently musical—it has nothing to do with brooks, birds, scaffolds, heavens, or gods, only with sounds and their organization. This is what Wackenroder strove for when he described the ideal listening mode, in a letter to Tieck of 5 May 1792: "the most attentive observation of the tones and their progression" and a "passive reception of the impressions of the tones."[58] It is the meaning upon which the notion of "absolute music" rests, but it is not restricted to absolute music: it is what makes the "use" (including both the production and the reception) of any musical object in any musical culture understandable to the members of that culture.

Wackenroder opposes this mode of listening to another, which he keeps fighting but never manages to ward off completely: the associative listening, where "thoughts and phantasy are led away on the waves of song." This uneasiness may be symptomatic of Wackenroder: a literary person, central in the development of an aesthetics that sets music apart from literature as "a world of its own." But it may also be symptomatic of human behavior in a much wider sense. When a Heavy Metal lead singer screams out his vocals, it isn't *just* a loud, high off-pitch tone; when Beethoven wrote his introduction to the Ninth, it wasn't *just* a series of descending fourths and fifths; and the sweet dissonances and jagged rhythms of a Machaut motet aren't *just* musical techniques. In all these cases the musical outcome (the organized sound) can be regarded as such, and make musical sense, as a high, off-pitch tone, etc., but leaving it at that would seem to be leaving out something essential. /

In the deepest sense the question is thus why we, as human beings, indulge in such fundamentally useless undertakings as writing string quartets, smearing pigmented oil on canvas, making up histories about Greek gods who

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[57]Just as these rules and practices in a language can be abstracted into a grammar, so can the stylistic norms of music. And just as a grammar can never in itself bring about understanding of a language, only point to the features that are essential for understanding, the same is true of musical style.

[58]Wackenroder, *Werke und Briefe*, p. 283-284.

never even existed.[59] John Barth, in his novel *End of the Road*, lets his hero (an author) exclaim:

> Articulation! There, by Joe, was *my* absolute, if I could be said to have one. [...] To turn experience into speech—that is, to classify, to conceptualize, to grammarize, to syntactify it—is always a betrayal of experience, a falsification of it; but only so betrayed can it be dealt with at all, and only in so dealing with it did I ever feel a man alive and kicking.[60]

"To turn experience into speech"—as simple and as impossible as that. To bring together and relate to each other the input from the senses and the way we make sense of this input rationally, in body and mind. Art can thus be seen as that particular human activity which objectifies experience in some form or another, in order to "point to" the experience and relate it to a wider range of experiences—ultimately the range called "life." What Barth's hero says is that the mere *experience* of the artefact is rarely the ultimate aim. Just as the details concerning the use of words are rarely the final aim in a meeting with a text, so the meaning of a piece of music will generally be searched for also on levels other than the purely structural: one will usually strive to connect the experience to one's life and world in some way or another.

In this relationship, language has a hegemonial position as the prerequisite of thought, and thus of how we rationally make sense of the input from our senses, how we experience reality and our place in it. Verbalization of this experience, while not necessary (nor possible) on the musical level of meaning, is called for to make the connection with Existence. And the moment we begin to verbalize about music, we are already making analogies and associations between musical structures and other kinds of experiences for which we have words and concepts closer at hand, ranging from the particular

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[59]Such a view on artistic production was held by the French poet François de Malherbe (1555–1628), who said that "it is foolish to write verse in the expectation of any reward other than one's own pleasure, for a good poet is no more use to the state than a good skittles player" and that "we were mad to spend the best years of our lives on an enterprise bringing so little benefit to either the public or ourselves"; quoted from Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics, vol III: Modern Aesthetics* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1974), p. 266. It is noteworthy that such a view appears at a time when the arts' functional bonds are being loosened and in part replaced by a speculative concept of art, which even invites discussion about the value of such a practice.

[60]Quoted from Leonard B. Meyer, *Explaining Music* (Berkeley etc.: University of California Press, 1973), p. 5.

to the near-universal, even to elements that may have a physical or biological background, such as the pairs up–down, fast–slow, loud–soft, or the physical foundation of the tonal system and the surge of adrenalin caused by loud, sudden sounds.

This observation can be taken further, in two directions. Owing to the open-endedness of the stylistic system and the principally unlimited possibilities of associations, any piece of music can "mean" virtually anything, and a crucial analytical task will be to single out the associations, historical or theoretical, that are relevant for the questions asked. In a description such as the following, found in an essay by Walter Wiora, the analogous character is quite evident: there is in a high-pitched tone on a violin nothing of the Divine (in any of its possible realizations), nor is there any "sense-filled nothingness" in a general pause:

> In order to point beyond the boundaries of human beings in the direction of what is unfathomably mighty and exalted, to what is infinite in space and time, to what is eerily foreign, far, abyssal, border regions of the soundscape were explored: extreme ranges of light and dark, forceful buildups of external and internal intensity, plunges into silence all the way to the nothingness of protracted pauses.[61]

While this is a fitting description of Bruckner, it is nevertheless an interpretation that gains force only by reference to a certain expressive tradition. This, however, does not exhaust the interpretative possibilities, nor does it give the particular features and interpretations priority over others that may be outside this tradition. A similar example for interpretative prejudice comes into play with regard to the use of stylistic elements typical of music associated with a religious or liturgical function: whereas stylistic allusions to plainchant or "Palestrina style" are the surest way to make music "religious," the religious character stems from the functional association rather than from properties of the music itself.

If the result of this line of thought is that there is no religious music, the other direction leads to the conclusion that all music is religious in a certain

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[61]"Um über die Grenzen des Menschen hinaus in die Richtung auf ungeheuer Übermächtiges und Erhabenes, auf Unendliches in Raum und Zeit, auf unheimlich Fremdes, Fernes, Abgründiges hinzudeuten, wurden Grenzzonen des Klangreichs ausgewertet: Äußerstes an Licht und Dunkel, gewaltige Steigerungen der äußeren und inneren Intensität, Versenkung in die Stille bis zum sinnerfüllten Nichts langer Pausen." Walter Wiora, "Einleitung" in Wiora et al., *Religiöse Musik in nicht-liturgischen Werken* ..., p. 17.

sense. The notion of an analogous "pointing to" implies that some kind of *translation* takes place from one kind of experience to another—and that something gets lost along the way. No matter how much we verbalize about music, based on the most profound knowledge of style and context, we will not reach an understanding of the music that way—even in cases when a conceptual program is intended by the composer. The artefact tries to be something it isn't, but it lies in its essence to keep trying.

The description, as outlined above, of different kinds of meaning in music corresponding to different uses of it, has a parallel in language theory and poetics. Roman Jakobson and Jacques Derrida, from their quite different starting points, have arrived at similar conceptions about poetic language. Jakobson holds that the poetic is a concentration on the expression of language and on the poem's play with its own elements, rather than on its ability to say something about the world.[62] To Derrida, poetry is the *untranslatable* in language—untranslatable because it is not bound up with the conceptual *sense* of the words, but with their physical *appearance*: "there is nothing outside of the text."[63] In both cases the referent is placed within parentheses in favor of the physical, sensual aspects of language, and a distinction is drawn between the aesthetic use and other possible uses of an expression.

Because of the non-conceptual character of art, there is thus always a residue that cannot be explained by rationalistic explanations, be they ancient or modern. The things that escape the thinker's grasp are the aspects of the artefact that refer directly to its physical, sensual properties; but the notion of untranslatability opens a possible path for approaching the character of art from a different angle. A translation entails the *presence* of something that is in fact *absent* (such as the original Italian language of a sonnet of Petrarch translated into English). This is a notion that can quite easily be fitted into an explanatory framework based on religious thinking. Conversely, the secular mode of thought is not equally prone to discuss Transcendent Presence, or at least lacks the conceptual apparatus required to give such a concept a simple explanation. It is noteworthy that the main currents in the aesthetics of our post-Christian century have left the *experience of art* more or less out of the calculation in favor of a detached perspective on the institutions of the art

[62]See Roman Jakobson, "La nouvelle poésie russe" in Jakobson, *Questions de poétique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973), p. 14.

[63]Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated and with an introduction by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), p. 158.

world, and that the ideas that have proven most useful for the present discussion come from language philosophers like Wittgenstein, Jakobson, and Derrida, who have struggled with the relations—connections and separations —between different levels and kinds of meaning. Since experience (sensual cognition) and reason (conceptual meaning creation) are activities in different media, there will always be an Ineffable.

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Eva Maria Jensen, born in Poland, has lived in Denmark since 1969. Educated in piano, music theory, composition, and philosophy in Cracow, in music and philosophy at the University of Copenhagen, and in organ and church music at the Royal Conservatory of Copenhagen, she has been a teacher at the University of Copenhagen's Department of Musicology since 1974, and an organist in a Danish church since 1978. She is associated with the Center for Art and Christianity at the University of Copenhagen's Department of Church History, and is currently completing a Ph.D. project with the title, "Eschatological Aspects in Music between 1890-1920." She has written research papers in Danish, English, and Polish.

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